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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Out of the Shadows:
Women and Politics in the French Revolution, 1789-1795

BY

Edith Shirley Anne Elson Roessler ©

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1991

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To my grandmothers,
Millicent Anne Carbin Madden and Catherine Edith McKitrick Elson,
both pioneer women of Western Canada.

ABSTRACT

The topic of women's political participation in the French Revolution has for the most part received little attention from historians who have tended to minimize the role of women in events or else to ignore it altogether. In reality many women played an important role during those years and displayed a growing political awareness and serious determination to participate in the political life of the new nation. In this thesis I attempt to present a scholarly study of the women's activities which is based on primary sources but which also incorporates the results of recent scholarship on the topic.

I have chosen to examine major topics involving women as political participants and to illustrate the importance of their activities in determining the directions taken by the Revolution in the years between 1789 and 1795. The first of these deals with the October Days. Subsequently, I explore the participation of women in that most characteristic aspect of the Revolution, the club movement, and also devote a chapter to three individual women whose activities seem to me to be of particular importance in the panorama of the Revolution. In my last chapter I examine the final phase of female collective action, the days of Germinal and Prairial in the year III (spring 1795) and demonstrate that the women played an active and important part in the events of those days. The women managed to withstand the attempts of government to divest them of any right to political activity and continued to

indulge in a vigorous grass roots participation right up until the avalanche of repressive legislation which was passed in May, 1795.

Women acted as part of the political mainstream of the Revolution. They came from a variety of backgrounds and rallied to universal human issues in what was really a valiant attempt to work within the framework of the new nation to achieve a better life for themselves, their families, and their fellow citizens. They participated on several occasions alongside the men with understanding and determination in an effort to resolve issues that were universal in scope. I have attempted in this thesis to give to women their rightful place in the central arena of revolutionary activity and in so doing to acknowledge that they were instrumental in shaping a modern France, and with it, a modern world.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The topic of women's participation in the French Revolution has generally received little attention from historians, who have displayed a tendency to minimize the role of women in the major events of those years, or else to ignore it altogether. In the nineteenth century those who did attempt to deal with the topic chose to approach it with an emphasis on individual women who had for some reason attained a degree of notoriety. This "femmes célèbres" approach taken by such historians as Jules Michelet and E. Lairtullier succeeded mainly in removing the revolutionary women from the mainstream of history and isolating them in a manner that rendered them secondary in importance to male participants, who were considered to be the key characters in the *grandes journées* of the Revolution. Their work was valuable, however, in that it provided, in the case of Michelet, a general overview of the female role as well as details of the lives of some individual women. Lairtullier produced a comprehensive work that is still useful due to the wealth of detail that it contains.[1]

Other valuable studies of the female participants were written around the turn of the century. Léopold Lacour, Marc de Villiers, and Adrien Lasserre produced books which brought together some primary material in works of general interest.[2] Jeanne Bouvier, in 1931, continued in this tradition with a synthesis of primary material and interpretation that is still of interest.[3]

But the work of these historians, although valuable, has been largely neglected in general histories of the revolution. Major researchers of a generation ago, which include Albert Soboul and Kare Tonnessen writing in French and George Rudé in English, also concentrated on the male sans-culottes to the almost total neglect of the group which formed their counterpart, the female sans-culotterie.[4]

In recent decades historians have produced some worthwhile general studies of the women's role in the Revolution, but most of these are only of article length.[5] In 1979 Darlene Levy, Harriet Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson produced a collection of documents which, although valuable in itself, left much room for analysis and development.[6] In French, Paule Marie Duhet published a book in 1971 on the women of the Revolution that contains some valuable material but is extremely sketchy on the events of the October Days of 1789 and omits entirely the important events of 1795.[7] Another recent French work that has no counterpart in English is Maria Cerati's monograph on the activities of the Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires.[8] There also have been good biographies published in recent years which deal with the lives of some of the more famous women of the period.[9]

Very recently, in anticipation of or concomitant with the celebration of the Bicentenary, some general books on the women of the Revolution have appeared. In French, these include works by Anne Soprani, Nicole Vray, Catherine Marand-Fouquet, and Annette Rosa.[10] In English, Linda Kelly produced a book of general interest which contains biographical information on several of the "femmes célèbres."[11] Written for popular audiences, however, these works are based on little original research in primary sources and are not extensively documented. One major scholarly contribution among these books, however, is that of the French historian Dominique Godineau, who in 1988 produced a thorough study at last of the female sans-culottes of Paris, whom she called the "citoyennes tricoteuses."[12] Godineau's work reflects prodigious, accurate research and careful, intelligent analyses and interpretations of primary material. An article by Godineau on the same topic is now available in English, along with another general article on women in the Revolution by Levy and Applewhite.[13]

Despite these various works on women in the Revolution, one cannot help but notice that the topic is still largely ignored in recent general histories. J. F. Bosher, for example, considers women only infrequently and in a very general manner, and like his predecessors, has failed to incorporate valuable information from recent works. The general studies of the French Revolution by William Doyle and Owen Connelly also treat female participation very cursorily.[14] Simon Schama has dealt in considerable detail with some of the activities of the women, but his work is semi-popular in appeal, and is not free of errors; moreover, Schama's long book ends with Thermidor and thus omits one of the most important periods of female activity during 1795.[15] Even the major contribution by French historians to the Bicentenary publications, the Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française edited by François Furet and Mona Ozouf, contains very little about women. The only articles on women therein are devoted to Queen Marie Antoinette and Madame de Staël, and the long article on the "Clubs et sociétés populaires" completely ignores the women's organizations.[16]

Some of the recent works on the topic focus on feminist issues and seem to dwell on the idea that these women were motivated above all by economic concerns. The contributions of Olwen Hufton and Ruth Graham are not entirely free of the old idea of the women as a group of "furies" and mégères preoccupied by their search for food. The image of Madame Defarge dies hard as does the belief that food is an issue of strictly female concern.

Thus, despite the various kinds of research and publication on the topic, there is still a need for a more general and scholarly study of the role of women during the French Revolution. I have attempted in my dissertation to meet this need by producing a study which is based on primary sources but which also incorporates the results of recent scholarship and which focuses on the political participation of the women in the main revolutionary arena. I have by no means attempted a complete history of the Revolution, nor even a complete history of the role of women in it, but rather I have chosen to examine major topics involving women as political participants and to illustrate the importance of their activities in determining the directions taken by the Revolution in the years between 1789 and 1795.

The first of these major topics is the October Days, which is the only well-known example of female activity during the Revolution. But while this topic is familiar, my research has shown that even in this event the role of women has not been adequately examined. Certainly the work of George Rudé, which offers the most detailed analysis of the event in English, leaves much that is unexplored. In Chapter II I offer my own extended analysis of the October Days, which brings out many significant details lacking in most accounts.

In subsequent chapters I explore the participation of women in that most characteristic aspect of the French Revolution, the club movement. In Chapter III I examine the women's political activity between October 1789 and the spring of 1793 when the most influential of the strictly female political clubs, the Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires, was organized in Paris. Chapter IV is devoted to an analysis of the history of that significant organization.

In addition to these examinations of the collective role of women I have also included a chapter devoted to three individual women whose activities seem to me to have been of particular interest and importance in the panorama of the revolution: Madame Roland, famous since the Revolution itself; Olympe de Gouges, who at least merits a casual reference in many general histories as the author of a Declaration of the Rights of Women; and Théroigne de Méricourt, who is also mentioned briefly in some general histories of the Revolution.

For my last substantive chapter, I examine in detail the final phase of female collective action in the Revolution, the days of Germinal and Prairial in the Year III (the spring of 1795). My research shows that these events were far more important than the brief return of women to the revolutionary stage as suggested by Levy and Appewhite.[17]

As sources I have consulted some archival material, but the most valuable of my primary sources proved to be some that have long been available to scholars but that have never before been fully exploited for the question of women's political involvement in the revolution. These include above all the files of *Le Moniteur universel*, which contain not only the proceedings of the various Revolutionary assemblies but also much other valuable information about the women's attitudes, behaviour, and burgeoning political awareness throughout the years of revolutionary activity. For some of the parliamentary debates the scholarly edition, *Les Archives parlementaires*, also proved to be of great value.

Besides *Le Moniteur*, other contemporary periodicals also contain much information relevant to women. Those I have consulted include *Les Révolutions de Paris*, *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, *L'Ami du peuple*, *Le Babillard*, *Le Courrier de l'Hymen*, *La Gazette des Halles*, *La Feuille du Soir*, *Les Etrennes Nationales des Dames*, *La Bouche de Fer*, *La Mère Duchesne*, and *Journal de Lyon*. Other primary sources which I have used for information on the women's activities include the proceedings of the Paris Jacobin Club, as compiled by Alphonse Aulard, and the collection of documents that he edited for the period following Thermidor.[18] Alexandre Tuetey's massive collection of archival documents on Paris during the Revolution also is of great value for my topic.[19]

Among other valuable primary sources is the report of the official inquiry in 1790 into the events of and participants in the October Days, which is a goldmine of information that a number of historians have cited but that appears to have been directly consulted but rarely.[20]

In combination with a variety of other primary material available in printed form, these sources have enabled me to piece together a picture of the women's contribution in some totality and with a wealth of detail. My research suggests that women played a role of far greater magnitude in the political arena of the Revolution than that which has so far been attributed to them.

CHAPTER II

The October Days

"Les hommes ont fait le 14 juillet, les femmes le 6 octobre. Les hommes ont pris la Bastille royale, et les femmes ont pris la royauté elle-même."--Jules Michelet, Les Femmes de la Révolution.

A. From Paris to Versailles

Although women as such played no role in the fiscal and political crises that led to the convocation of the Estates-General in 1789, they soon began to participate in some of most significant events in that first year of the Revolution. Working women had for some time been feeling that their traditional rights within the guilds and their participation in religious and secular ceremonies were the object of increasing intervention by the state. The feeling of loss of control in their daily lives resulted in the formulation of petitions by groups of women in which they expressed grievances; the famous Cahiers des doléances taken early in 1789 testified to the growing discontent of the working class women of Paris. The flower-sellers, the laundresses, even the unhappily married women, had their say in the Cahiers.[1] At the same time, women were experiencing increasing difficulty in obtaining enough food to feed their families. Wages were low and bread was scarce and in April a few women registered their discontent with the situation by participating in the Réveillon Riots in Paris. But already the political theme appeared along with the economic issues, for a woman, Marie-Jeanne Trumeau, was charged with inciting the rioters by crying, "Allons, vive le Tiers Etat!" She was sentenced to death but reprieved because she was pregnant.[2]

The attack on Bastille on July 14, 1789 was predominantly a male affair, but a woman, Marie Charpentier, femme Hauserne, a laundress, was afterwards officially honored as one of the 900 vainqueurs de la Bastille. Pauline Léon, later to be president of the Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires, was present in the streets that day, erecting barricades. They were not unique, however, for contemporary prints show several women, armed, among the insurgents, who had the support not only of the entire population of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, but of Paris as a whole.[3] Throughout that first summer of the Revolution groups of women formed huge processions of a religious nature in which market women and laundresses wound their way through the streets of Paris to the doors of l'église Sainte-Geneviève. These processions, although orderly and disciplined in appearance, were regarded by clergy and nobility as menacing in that they seemed to indicate, or even foreshadow, a latent intention of a group participation of a more violent kind.[4]

On October 4, 1789, against this backdrop of increasing unrest, word of an event which had taken place at Versailles three days earlier reached Paris. What had begun as a gathering of troops had escalated into a raucous celebration. In the course of the evening the tricolor cockade, symbol of the new French nation, had been insulted with the apparent approbation of the queen. Due to the existing situation in Paris, the food shortages and general uncertainty about the political situation, the incident at Versailles served to fuel an already smouldering situation, and remarkably enough, the most intense reaction came from the female population of Paris. The response came in the form of a determined group action which displayed strong political overtones from the outset and which marked the beginning of a burgeoning political awareness among the women. Maturation of women's political responsibility would blossom during the years of revolutionary struggle which were to follow and which would eventually reach its height in the the spring days of 1795. However, events were to show that the seeds of a female political understanding were already present during the October Days.

Those days, historians agree, were essentially women's days. Exactly why the women responded with such energy and determination at this particular time has been the subject of debate as has the reason for the sudden intersection of political and economic interest. The women realized, albeit in a somewhat simplistic way, that political intervention was the means to practical reform, a reform that was becoming more crucial momentarily as the threat of famine worsened in the capital.[5]

Although the harvest of 1789 was good, at least in the Paris region, grain was in short supply for several reasons; the milling process was delayed by lack of wind and a partial drought, fear of state bankruptcy encouraged hoarding of money, and bread prices remained high.[6] According to a contemporary report, "Il nous serait impossible de rapporter en détail les mouvements dont les grains étaient l'occasion: démarches des districts: démarches des boulangers: assemblées; consultations; lecture de projets".[7] Reports of widespread hoarding circulated in the capital and by late summer the feeling in Paris was one of near panic. Violent incidents were increasing daily as the population struggled to obtain food and to force a fair and equitable distribution of the same. Women were noticeably present in the crowds which acted out their frustration in the weeks preceding the October march. During the night of August 1-2 the deputy mayor of Saint-Denis, Chatel, was stabbed to death "dans une émeute populaire suscitée par des individus demandant la diminution du prix du pain." He had refused their request and had made derogatory remarks about the crowd, calling them "canaille." Among those arrested was at least one woman, femme Jannot.[8]

Incidents involving seizure of grain carts attempting to provision the city also increased during this period. On September 16 women stopped five carts of grain at Chaillot and brought them to the Hôtel de Ville. There the women complained that "les hommes n'y entendaient rien et qu'elles voulaient se mêler des affaires." The women repeated the action the next day at the Place des Trois Maries.[9] The Moniteur reported that as the scarcity of food increased so did the number of deaths directly attributable to starvation. During the night of September 22-23 there were less than thirty sacks of grain at the Halle de la Ville in Paris. Although four or five hundred sacks arrived in the early morning hours there still existed a shortage of flour and therefore of bread. "De quatre heures du matin la foule assiégeait les boutiques des boulangers: hommes, femmes, vieillards, enfants, tous dévançaient le jour pour s'armer contre la famine, un pain acheté, ou plutôt conquis l'argent à la main, était, pour ainsi dire, une victoire." Many wage earners lost their day's pay because they were still in the bread line at four p.m. and "sans avoir pu même la veille assouvir la faim qui le dévorait, se trouvait le lendemain sans argent et sans force, pressé entre le besoin et le désespoir."[10] The inadequacy of the food supply, the clumsy and unfair system of distribution, the shortage of money, and the demise of luxury industry and resulting rise in unemployment, all contributed to the bleak prospects of Parisians.

In the face of this escalating hardship women were making a valiant effort to feed their families. But they were also struggling to understand the political tension which held all Paris in its grip. In so doing they reached far beyond the boundaries of their traditional domain. The women knew that the king had continually resisted the work of the Revolution, that he had refused to give up the royal veto, to sign the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, and to sanction the decrees of the night of August 4. The women were not unmoved by the message inherent in the king's actions and to further aggravate the situation, persistent rumours were circulating that an aristocratic plot involving the queen was forming at court with the objective of putting an end to the Revolution. As well, the women could not help but notice a marked increase in the number of soldiers in the area of Paris and Versailles during the last days of September.

It was in this atmosphere of uncertainty that the details of an "orgy" at Versailles were received in Paris. The women, however, were already prepared to act. Their approach to king and court had been a certainty for several days. Testimony given later at the Châtelet inquiry into the events of October showed that hunger was undeniably a factor in their action. Some women arriving at Versailles were living embodiments of the famine that afflicted Paris and they are known to have complained to the king that they had been thirty-six hours without food. In response to the king's offer of money they were reported to have replied, "Ce n'est pas de l'argent qu'il nous faut, c'est du pain."[11] But concern for the matters other than food was certainly evident. In Paris the women were known to have murmured in the days preceding the march that "la source du mal est à Versailles. Il faut aller chercher le roi et l'amener à Paris."[12] Some of the women expressed their animosity toward the queen as the perpetrator of traitorous plots and of their personal misery, wishing openly to have the opportunity to insult her, and a few even threatened to kill her. A female witness before the Châtelet inquiry stated that one women expressed the desire to carry "la tête de la reine au bout d'une épée."[13] Witnesses there indicated that on the morning of October 5 the women rose in revolt in two separate districts of Paris, namely the central markets and the Faubourg St. Antoine. According to the witness Jacques Delavigne, a lawyer in the parlement of Paris, the movement began after an unidentified girl from St. Eustache or Les Halles district ran into a guardhouse, seized a drum and marched around adjacent streets beating on it and shouting about the scarcity of bread. This, said the witness, resulted in "l'attroupement de plusieurs femmes," of whom "le nombre grossit sensiblement" and who then headed for the Hôtel de Ville.[14] In the Faubourg St. Antoine, a persistent woman forced the sexton of the church of St. Marguerite to sound the tocsin. The parish priest had refused to comply when two men made the same request a few moments earlier, but despite his second refusal "le tocsin fut sonne, le sonneur y ayant été contraint."[15]

In response to the drums and the bells, more women began to congregate in groups and to make their way toward the Place de Grève. They began arriving there at about nine a.m., according to Jean-Sylvain Bailly, mayor of Paris, who described in his Mémoires the events of that morning. He stated that the cause of the gathering was the complete lack of flour and the women's intention to complain to the officials of the Commune about their negligence and ineptitude in provisioning the city. Soon, he noted, the thrust of the women's intentions had changed and they "ne parlaient plus que d'obtenir l'agrément de M. le maire et des représentans pour aller à Versailles."[16] Shortly before, as the women proceeded toward the Place de Grève, a luckless baker whose two-pound loaf had been found to be seven ounces short had narrowly escaped with his life from a group of incensed women. A witness at the inquiry, Gérard Henri de Blois, lawyer in the parlement de Paris, testified that a major general in the National Guard had told him that "le peuple qui était sur la place demandait que ce boulanger fut attaché à la lanterne."[17]

The courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville was not well guarded on the morning of October 5. Bailly had been on guard there throughout the night in anticipation of trouble but had left at about five a.m. and had at that time sent the National Guard home as well. By the time the women began arriving there at about eight a.m. only two commissioners were on duty. It was reported that there entered "dans la cour de l'hôtel-de-ville un premier peleton de femmes, dont la plupart jeunes, vêtues de blanc, coiffées et poudrées, ayant l'air enjoué." This first group appears to have been quite well behaved, "annonçant aucune mauvaise intention" and the women were further described by the witness as curious but polite.[18] Their immediate interest was neither food nor politics but a simple curiosity about the building itself. They explored the various rooms of the Hôtel de Ville and asked about the purpose of each.

The women even asked for assistance for some of the members of the group, asking the witness to assist "des femmes qu'elles avaient forcées à les suivre, parce que les unes étaient grosses, et les autres se sentaient incommodées." The women asked that de Blois "fît entrer et asseoir ces dames, en leur offrant des secours si elles en avaient besoin." The witness was struck by the almost childlike curiosity and spirit of the women as they entered and investigated the building.[19]

Guillaume-Louis Lefèvre, in charge of the arms store at the Hôtel de Ville, testified that he witnessed the gathering at the Place de Grève and received quite a different impression of the crowd. He claimed that he had become the victim of escalating crowd violence when the women entered the building and ransacked it for weapons. The crowd, he testified, broke into the arms store and took between 700 and 800 muskets and "de là se porta au second magasin à l'entresol, où étaient les tentes couvertures, cartouches, pierres à fusil, chapeaux et faisceaux d'armes, qui furent en partie pillés, et particulièrement les faisceaux d'armes, dont il a ôté le bois et le coutil volé." Lefevre testified that the crowd then spread throughout the building. Later, at about eleven o'clock, he was stopped by a group of sixteen to eighteen persons who dragged him up to the clock tower. He reported that a cord was tied around his neck and a piece of wood attached to it. He said that in another second his head would have been cut off if a woman in the group, or a man disguised as a woman, had not cut the cord.[20]

The testimony of Stanislas-Marie Maillard, clerc d'huissier and hero of July 14, illuminates some of the women's attitudes and grievances expressed that morning at the Hôtel de Ville. He said that a state of great disorder prevailed when he arrived there on the morning of October 5. The building, he said, was occupied by a crowd of women. They at first refused Maillard entry but when he was recognized as one of the volunteers of the Bastille they allowed him to pass. By this time the women were becoming quite agitated and Maillard's attempts to calm them met with very little success. The Châtelet inquiry recorded that Maillard succeeded in getting to the centre of the group of women and "il les trouva les unes enfonçant les portes d'en-bas." Meanwhile, some of the others were busy gathering up the papers in various rooms, "disant que c'était tout ce qu'on avait fait depuis l'époque de la révolution," and threatening to burn them.[21]

The crowd at this time was becoming quite determined, and the women were in the forefront of the action, although by now some men were present inside the building. These men, said Maillard, turned all the weapons over to the women and more women soon arrived to burn the documents that remained in the building. Maillard managed to confiscate their torches and he suggested to the women that they should present their complaints peacefully to the representatives of the commune. He said that "prèsque toutes demandaient pain" and their response to his suggestion was emphatically negative. They proclaimed "que toute la commune était composée de mauvais citoyens qui méritaient tous d'être à la lanterne, M. Bailly et M. de Lafayette les premiers."[22]

Maillard was not alone in noticing the hostility of the crowd toward Lafayette, commander of the National Guard, and toward Bailly. Henri de Blois stated that "il en vit une partie monter l'escalier...et sonnèrent le tocsin; une autre partie rirent, chantèrent et dansèrent dans la cour demandant quelquefois: Où est M. Bailly, où est M. de Lafayette?" Lefevre's testimony included the statement that "il a entendu plusieurs voix dire: 'L'Hôtel-de-Ville est composé de tous aristocrates qui s'entendent avec le roi.'"[23]

Bailly also witnessed the activity of the women at the Hôtel de Ville and said that at first they were peaceful and spoke only of obtaining permission to go to Versailles. He said that one of the commanders of the National Guard attempted to utilise their "disposition pacifique" and put them to work defending the entrance to the building. He said that "elles se sont chargées avec zèle de cet emploi" and he saw that at first they only allowed other women to enter. These did so quickly and soon spread throughout the building. "En peu d'instans, elles ont rempli les cours, les escaliers et les salles. Quelques unes sont montées au befroi, et ont sonné le tocsin. D'autres se sont répandues dans les bureaux, mais sans y commettre de violences. Un petit nombre a entrepris de délivrer les prisonniers détenus à l'Hôtel-de-Ville, et n'a que trop bien réussi; mais tout le reste a désavoué cet attentat."[24]

The mayor went on to describe how a small door under the arcade was forced in order to gain access to the building and how it allowed the crowd to surge in with the result that disorder and confusion reigned. The doors to the arms store were forced and the women armed themselves. They also broke into the treasury, forced several cupboard doors, and removed money. Even worse, "Les noms les plus chers et les plus respectables ont été préferés avec les injures et les menaces les plus atroces."[25]

This witness, like Maillard, believed that the Hôtel de Ville narrowly escaped being torched by the women. They were stopped, he said, just as they were about to set fire "aux endroits les plus combustible de l'édifice" and had some good citizens not intervened many important papers and much money would have been lost.[26]

Evénement de Paris et Versailles, a contemporary journal, stated that at about eight o'clock in the morning many women gathered at the Hôtel de Ville. The account illustrates that the women were at this point thinking in both economic and political terms. Although their attitudes were not always consistent one with another and may not have shown any great sophistication as yet, they were rooted in an undeniable practicality and illustrated a growing desire for political intervention to change the existing situation. Some demanded to speak with Bailly and Lafayette in order to find out "pourquoi on avait tant de peine à avoir du pain, et si cher." Others wanted the king and queen to come to Paris and to live at the Louvre, "où ils feraient... infiniment mieux qu'à Versailles." Still others wanted all black cockades, which were symbols of the House of Habsburg, proscribed. Others asked that the Flanders Regiment and the bodyguards be sent away. The king and queen, some thought, should have the Parisian National Guard for their defence.[27]

The same source described the danger in which the commanding officers of the National Guard found themselves and corroborated the testimony of Lefevre who stated that he was in grave danger of being hanged. The journal stated that it was a miracle that any of them had escaped with their lives given the animosity of the crowd which was infuriated by their inability to gather more arms and ammunition.[28]

In the courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville a group of women had gathered who were determined to leave for Versailles. The testimony of Maillard described what was happening in the Place de Grève. He said that "il prit un tambour à la porte de l'hôtel-de-ville, où les femmes étaient déjà assemblées en très grand nombre." After choosing Maillard to lead them on their journey, the women decided to go in groups to various areas of the city and recruit other women to march with them. They agreed to meet at the Place Louis XV and proceed from there.[29] Some of the women showed enthusiasm for joining the march, such as la femme Cheret who "quitte sa vertueuse mère brusquement, abandonne le bénefice qu'elle allait faire, se mêle au Dames citoyennes qui allaient à Versailles, et vole, avec elles, sous la conduite des sieurs Hulin, Maillard, et autres volontaires de la Bastille."[30]

The testimony of Antoine-Jacques Poursin de Grandchamp, one of the king's secretaries, also describes the departure. He testified that everywhere people were shouting "Du pain et à Versailles." He witnessed the arrival at the Place de Grève of many people armed with pikes, brooms, spears and other such instruments, he saw cannons being loaded, and many women "qui se sont mêlées à toutes cettes cohues." Finally, he testified, he saw the whole assemblage depart for Versailles resembling "une armée de croisés."[31]

Another description of the actual departure comes from Bailly, who reported that while the tumult continued inside the building "les femmes qui y avaient pénétré les premières s'en étaient retirées, et marchaient à Versailles sous la conduite des volontaires de la Bastille, entraînant, bon gré mal gré, toutes les femmes qu'elles rencontraient en chemin." He went on to describe the arms and ammunition which the crowd of women had managed to gather. "Des canons les suivaient, assujettis avec des cables sur des voitures qu'elles avaient arrêtées pour cet usage. Elles portaient aussi de la poudre et des boulets; les unes conduisaient les chevaux, d'autres étaient assises sur les canons et tenaient la mèche à la main." He estimated the size of the crowd at about four thousand women and about four to five hundred men.[32]

Maillard's testimony at the Châtelet gives probably the most detailed description of the events of the march. Several incidents along the way illustrate that the women were struggling to make sense of the political realities of their situation. They attempted to show respect for the monarchy as they proceeded but at times engaged in activities and outbursts that demonstrated their hostility. As well, the women were ambivalent about Maillard's leadership and challenged it several times during the march. The group left the Place de Grève sometime around noon and after it had made its way along the quai des Orfevres, "de l'Ecole jusqu'au dernier guichet du Louvre," Maillard and the women had their first disagreement. He did not wish to cross the garden of the Tuileries on the grounds that the Swiss guards would oppose such an action and that it would be an insult to the king to have such a large number of people invade the gardens.[33] The women rejected his suggestion emphatically and in their turn suggested that he might like to resign as their leader "<s'il> ne voulait point condescendre à leurs volontés" and at the same time "plusieurs d'entre elles se mirent en devoir de se frappait." Maillard prudently decided to change his stance and go along with the wishes of the women. He was obliged, he said, "de leur dire qu'il allait le faire, mais au moins qu'elles lui permissent d'employer toute la prudence qu'exigeait une démarche aussi inconsidérée." The women agreed.[34]

An altercation did take place with one of the Swiss guards in the Tuileries. Jeanne Martin, la femme Lavarenne, was assigned by Maillard to go ahead of the group and warn the guard that they were coming and that there was nothing to fear. The women would commit no misdemeanors. Unfortunately, this tactic failed because the Swiss guard refused to listen to the woman and drew his sword. He then pursued Madame Lavarenne, who had a broom in her hand, and who managed to save herself by crying out for help. The other women, Maillard reported, did not approve of the conduct of the Swiss guard and wished to kill him. Maillard, who took every opportunity in his testimony to make himself look capable but at the same time not unpatriotic, pointed out to the group that the guard "représentait la personne du roi et était aussi respectable." The women barely paid attention to his admonitions and eventually Maillard stated that he would speak with the guard himself. As events were to prove, the guard was not in any mood to talk and directed his blows at Maillard, who was rescued by Madame Lavarenne. Seemingly undaunted, she was able to deliver such a blow with her broom to the crossed swords of the men that they were both disarmed. One of the other women then stepped in and knocked the guard to the ground. Another one, armed with a musket equipped with a bayonet, had intentions, apparently, of finishing him off when Maillard intervened to save him.[35] The women's burgeoning political sensibilities obviously were as yet not as finely honed as their survival skills, but their political acuity would also blossom with time and experience.

Madame Lavarenne, however, despite her enthusiastic participation in the brawl, testified that she was forced, at the outset, to join the crowd of women. She claimed that the women "lui ont mis un baton à la main, la menaçant de la maltraiter si elle ne marchait point." Madame Lavarenne had an arsenal of excuses at her disposal which she tried one by one on the insistent group of women. She had not eaten, she had no money, she could not possibly go with them. However, "elles lui repondirent, 'Marche, marche, tu ne manqueras de rien.'" To avoid the punishments with which she was threatened she followed the women. Her account of the fracas in the Tuileries is similar to

Maillard's. She testified that "<étant> parvenues aux Tuileries, et ayant voulu passer par le jardin le suisse nommé Frédéric s'y étant refusé, cela a donné lieu à une rixe entre ce suisse et le sieur Maillard, qui était à leur tête." After the altercation, said Madame Lavarenne, the group continued on its way to Versailles.[36]

It was decided that the Place Louis XV, originally demarcated for the final rendezvous before the actual march, proved to be inadequate for the meeting of the various groups of women to take place. They decided to go instead to the Champs-Elysées, Place d'Armes where Maillard saw other groups of women arrive from all directions. They assembled, "armées de manches à balais, lances, fourches, épées, pistolets et fusils." As yet they had no ammunition because they hoped to force Maillard to go with them to the Arsenal. Maillard, however, was able to dissuade them from this activity, explaining to them that since they wished only to ask for bread and justice at the National Assembly, it was hardly appropriate to bear arms. He convinced them, or so he said, that they would fare better at Versailles if they did not use force. He stated that "à force de prières et de protestations, il parvint à faire mettre bas les armes à ces femmes, à l'exception de quelques-unes qui s'y refusèrent, mais que d'autres plus sages firent céder."[37]

The Moniteur of October 10 described the role of Maillard in this incident. It said that the women's first act was "de se jeter sur leur chef, et lui demandant toutes ensemble qu'il les conduise à l'Arsenal pour s'en faire délivrer." Happily, he was able to make the women listen to him and to persuade them that the Arsenal was empty. He claimed that he did even more. "Il les engage à se défaire de leurs armes, en leur représentant que puisqu'elles allaient à l'Assemblée nationale pour lui demander justice et du pain, elles attendriraient bien davantage cette assemblée en s'y présentant dans l'attitude de suppliantes et en employant les prières qu'en y arrivant les armes à la main, comme pour l'investir et lui dicter des lois."[38] Two women in particular held out and insisted that they needed their muskets for self defense. The response of the others was to forcibly disarm them, saying that there would be no exceptions. Maillard claimed that by now the women had such confidence in him that "elles dirent toutes d'une voix unanime qu'elles ne souffriraient que lui à leur tête." At this time the women insisted that all the men in the group with the exception of Maillard, or so he testified, must walk behind them and "une vingtaine <d'elles> se détachèrent pour faire rentrer tous les autres hommes derrière elles."[39]

Several witnesses testified that after the group left Paris, the journey proceeded uneventfully out to Versailles.[40] Maillard gave the only detailed account of events which took place along the way. He said that the group took the route to Versailles with eight or ten drummers in front of them. He estimated that six or seven thousand women were present. They passed through

Chaillot, making their way along the river. All the houses were locked up, probably, Maillard concluded, due to fear of the mob that they had heard was coming their way. Despite the fact that everything was tightly closed the women began knocking on doors and were fully prepared to force their way in. Wishing to prevent trouble, Maillard stopped the women and told them that it was not an honorable way to behave and he would resign as their leader "si elles se comportaient ainsi" and that their actions would be regarded very negatively at Versailles. On the other hand he promised that "si elles allaient paisiblement, avec honnêteté, tous les citoyens de la capitale leur en sauraient bon gré."[41]

The women behaved with restraint until they reached Sèvres. On the road they passed several wagons coming from Versailles where word of the advancing crowd had struck fear into the hearts of many nobles. Approaching Sèvres it was rumored that the bridge was closed as were all the houses and businesses, and Maillard asked if the inhabitants of Sèvres were armed in anticipation of crowd violence. He was told by a passerby that "Sèvres était dans la plus grande consternation, que tout était fermé, et qu'il serait impossible de trouver aucune rafraichissement pour ces dames." It became obvious upon entering Sèvres that no food was available. As a result the women became extremely unruly, once again ready to break down doors and take what they wanted. Maillard called for the citizens of Sèvres to defend their property but the armed men who arrived assisted the women.

Maillard was eventually able to buy a small amount of bread and some wine and the women settled down. Some of the women paid for the wine and some did not and Maillard, in his testimony, said that he only regretted that he was unable to supply his companions with more.[42]

The group retook the road to Versailles passing through Viroflay, where they met several men on horseback who appeared to be bourgeois and had black cockades on their hats. The reaction of the women to the sight of the black cockades was negative in the extreme and Maillard once again feared losing control of the group. The women stopped the riders and "voulaient se porter à des excès contr'eux, disant qu'il fallait qu'ils périssent pour subir le châtiment de l'insulte qu'ils avaient faite et qu'ils faisaient à la cocarde nationale." Severe punishment was meted out. The women hit one of them, "le demontèrent de son cheval, en lui arrachant la cocarde noire."[43] The group had been forced to stop as the fracas blocked its path and Maillard went to the rescue of the unfortunate victim. The women agreed to spare his life if he gave up his horse to them and if he walked at the back of their procession, wearing a sign on his back which identified him as "ayant insulté la cocarde nationale." Maillard noted that the victim agreed to everything "pourvu qu'on lui laissât la vie" and one of the women mounted his horse and rode off to Versailles to give warning that they were coming.[44]

The group soon entered the wide avenue leading into Versailles and there encountered two more men dressed as bourgeois and wearing black cockades on round hats. Some of the women immediately took the hats and gave the cockades to Maillard. Two of the women mounted the horses with the men behind them and proceeded on toward their destination. After this incident the group moved the cannons to the back of the procession and agreed with Maillard that they should not present a frightening aspect to the citizens, but should enter the city in a non-menacing way. This strategy seems to have been effective because, according to Maillard they made their entrance shouting, "Vive Henri IV! Vive le roi!" and were greeted with the shout, "Vive nos Parisiennes!" from the crowds along the avenue.[45]

Some witnesses testifying at the Châtelet gave brief descriptions of the women's arrival at Versailles. Marie-Pierre Louvain testified "qu'elles y sont arrivées vers six heures, sont entrées dans un cabaret pour se sécher, et boire une bouteille de vin; qu'une ou deux des femmes de sa compagnie ayant reconnu dans ce cabaret une femme habitante de Versailles, qu'elle les a reçues chez elle au nombre de huit, qu'elles y ont passé la nuit."[46] Marie-Catherine-Victoire Sacleux testified that the women, having arrived at the Place d'Armes at Versailles, "rencontrèrent des gardes-du-corps qui s'opposaient à leur passage; que dans la mêlée, elle déposante a reçu une piqûre ou d'epée ou de sabre sur la seconde phalange du doigt annulaire de la main gauche." Anne

Forêts testified that upon her arrival with the group of women from Paris "elle a vu les gardes du roi rangés en bataille; qu'un de ces gardes a porté un coup de sabre à une femme qui a été effrayée, ayant pali, elle croit que cette femme n'a pas été blessée."[47]

Madame de la Tour du Pin stated in her Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans that protection against the oncoming mob had been arranged in Versailles. The National Guard had been called to assemble at the Place d'Armes and had arranged themselves for battle with their backs to the grill which surrounded the royal courtyard. Between the stable and the grill was stationed the Flanders regiment. The Swiss Guards, of whom there was always a strong detachment at Versailles, were situated within the courtyard. All gates and entrances to the château were closed and "des portes qui n'avaient pas tourné sur leurs gonds depuis Louis XIV se fermèrent pour la première fois."[48] The king had returned with haste from hunting when apprised of the women's approach. He arrived at Versailles at about three o'clock. Shortly thereafter, at sometime between five and six o'clock, the first of the crowd of women entered the city. In the rain and the gathering darkness they made their way up the avenue to the door of the National Assembly in the Salle des Menus Plaisirs. According to Madame de la Tour du Pin, "l'avant-garde de trois à quatre cents femmes commença à arriver et a se répandre dans l'avenue. Beaucoup entrèrent à l'Assemblée et dirent qu'elles étaient venues chercher du pain et emmener les députés a Paris."[49]

B. In the National Assembly

Accounts of the women's entry into the National Assembly vary. According to the Archives parlementaires, Target had just finished speaking when the women arrived. "A peine M. Target finissait de parler, qu'une députation d'un très-grand nombre de citoyennes de Paris, déjà arrivées a Versailles, se présenta à la barre. Maillard est à leur tête, et porte la parole."[50] According to the president of the Assembly, Mounier, "une vingtaine de femmes" appeared at the bar of the National Assembly at four o'clock and he allowed them to enter. He stated that "j'exhortai ces femmes à ne pas troubler la tranquillité publique" and that he announced to them that "le roi et l'assemblée nationale feraient tous leurs efforts pour procurer des subsistances à la ville de Paris."[51] Maillard gave a somewhat different account. He said that he had restricted the number of women who entered with him. At the door of the Assembly he had turned and addressed the women, explaining to them that he did not think it a good idea for all of them to try to enter at once and that perhaps five or six of them would be sufficient but "elles se refusèrent et voulurent toutes entrer." At this time officers of the guard intervened and "<ils> invitèrent ces femmes à ne point monter davantage que douze." The women debated among themselves and finally about fifteen were chosen to enter with Maillard and proceed to the bar of the Assembly.[52]

The most detailed description of action inside the Assembly is that of Maillard, even though it might be expected that the Moniteur or the Archives parlementaires might be more complete. For the political concerns of the women Maillard's testimony is most valuable as the other accounts contain only brief descriptions of events. Maillard testified that the entry of his group into the Assembly interrupted a discussion of food shortages in Paris. He began by instructing the women to be quiet and Mounier permitted him to speak. Maillard requested that the bodyguards of the king should redress the wrong that they had done to the national cockade. At this, several members of the Assembly began to shout that the guards had never insulted the cockade, that those wishing to be citizens had to do so of their own free wills, and that it was not possible to force them to conform. Displaying the three black cockades collected on the road to Versailles, Maillard said "qu'au contraire, il ne devait exister aucune personne qui ne se fît honneur de l'être; que s'il y avait parmi cette auguste assemblée des membres qui se trouvassent déshonorés de ce titre <citoyen>, ils devaient en être exclus sur-le-champ." This expression of patriotism apparently drew great applause from the Assembly and there were shouts of, "Oui, tous doivent l'être et nous sommes tous citoyens."[53]

At this time Maillard was given a national cockade by some of the bodyguards. He showed this to the women who cheered and shouted, "Vive le roi et MM.les gardes-du-corps!" Maillard then addressed the problem of the large number of troops in the vicinity and the uneasiness that this had caused in Paris. He said that in order to prevent trouble and to allay the fears of Parisians, the Flanders regiment should be sent away "parce que les citoyens craignaient une révolution de leur part." The president assured the group that he would advise the king of Maillard's concerns and Maillard stated that "dans le moment de calamité et de disette de pain où nous étions" the regiment would be better off in one of the provincial cities rather than so close to the capital "où le pain valait 3 livres 12 sols les quatre livres."[54]

According to Maillard, Mounier had suggested that any delegation to the king should be delayed because the king had only very recently returned from the hunt. Maillard was able to convince him otherwise, stating that "le roi avait vraisemblement vu ou pu savoir que les femmes de Paris étaient à Versailles en très-grand nombre, et que cela devait lui causer des inquiétudes." Mounier agreed but admonished the women to be patient because a situation like this one could not be resolved in a hurry.[55] In recounting the same discussion Mounier stated that a deputy whose name he did not recall proposed to send a deputation to the king to inform him of the situation in the capital. Mounier stated that this suggestion was readily accepted by the Assembly and at about four o'clock the delegation set out. He recalled that "douze députés m'accompagnèrent, et il fallut consentir à conduire quelques femmes avec nous."[56]

After the deputation left, the women in the Assembly expressed hostility toward the clergy. An abbé, wearing a cross, tried to kiss the hand of one of the women, who responded with disrespect and rage. "<Elle> lui donne un coup dessus, en lui disant qu'elle n'était pas f......pour baiser la patte d'un chien." The women then shouted, "A bas la calotte! C'est tout le clergé qui fait notre mal." Maillard explained that the women's hostility resulted from rumours in Paris that the clergy was blocking the Assembly's efforts to make a constitution. A chevalier de Saint-Louis, seated on the president's left, was obviously annoyed and responded that when a stranger enters the Assembly and insults its members "il devait subir une punition exemplaire sur-le-champ." Maillard explained that it had never been his intention to malign any member of the Assembly. Rather, he said, he had felt that he was doing the clergy a service, since he could not believe them guilty of such behaviour. By bringing the issue out in the open he had afforded the clergy the opportunity to defend itself. He explained that he had only said it to prevent further disorder in the Assembly. Robespierre then made a speech, "plein de patriotisme", which "rendit toutes les femmes tranquilles pour le moment."[57] But the women waiting outside the National Assembly had become very unruly and agitated due to a rumour that their leader had been poisoned. Maillard had to go out and reassure the crowd. When the women then requested that they should all be allowed to enter the building, Maillard convinced them, he said, that it would not be possible. He told them that "elles pouvaient compter qu'elles seraient victorieuses" and that "il était plus beau de l'être de cette manière, que si elles eussent répandu du sang comme elles le voulaient faire dans la capitale et en route." In response the women "lui promirent toutes d'être tranquilles."[58]

Meanwhile in front of the National Assembly the remaining group of women had become involved with the bodyguards and shots had been fired. Maillard testified that some of the women entered the Assembly and reported that they had arrested one of the bodyguards and were awaiting Maillard's decision concerning the type of death he merited. Maillard claimed to have rushed outside where "il descendit au milieu de ces femmes; il aperçut un garde-du-corps qui était tenu par la bride de son cheval, et qui voulait descendre de dessus; mais les femmes s'y opposèrent, sans lui faire aucun mal, que de lui tenir des propos injurieux." The bodyguard managed to escape and Maillard cautioned the women not to go any nearer the chateau.[59] Jean-Felix Faydel, a deputy from Quercy who was obviously hostile to the action of the women, testified that during the time that Maillard was engaged in dialogue with the Assembly "la troupe d'hommes et de femmes qui étaient venus de Paris, continua de pénétrer dans l'Assemblée, et d'en occuper tous les bancs." He described their presence as being very disruptive. "Ces personnages faisaient la conversation à haute voix, avec ceux qui étaient aux galeries; ils portaient les désordres dans tous les rangs: plusieurs de ces femmes se portèrent au bureau, et d'autres entourèrent le fauteuil du président." The president's chair was occupied by the bishop of Langres in Mounier's absence and the witness testified that "plusieurs de ces femmes obligèrent M. l'évêque de Langres et plusieurs députés a recevoir leurs embrassades."[60] Later in the evening, the women "qui se trouvaient encore en foule dans la salle," interrupted the attempt made by the Assembly to discuss a matter pertaining to the criminal code. They insisted upon returning to a discussion of food supply. "Et quoi! s'écrient elles, que nous importe la jurisprudence criminelle, quand Paris est sans pain." At this Mirabeau requested that the president retain the dignity of the deliberations "en donnant ordre de faire retirer dans les galeries les étrangers répandus dans la salle." He complained that "ce n'est pas au milieu d'un tumulte scandaleux que les représentants de la nation peuvent discuter avec sagesse." He expressed the hope "que les amis de la liberté ne sont pas venus ici pour gêner la liberte de l'Assemblée." Another deputy went so far as to propose that they should hold the meeting "chez le Roi," but Mirabeau objected, saying that "il n'est pas de notre dignité, il n'est pas même sage de deserter notre poste au moment où des dangers imaginaires ou réels semblent menacer la chose publique."[61] These words "font impression sur les femmes" and "elles gardent le silence." The deputies deliberated until four a.m.[62]

C. The Women Capture Their King.

Meanwhile, the small group of deputies and women were making their way to the chateau to present their case to the king. Mounier described the journey. "Nous étions à pied, dans la boue, avec une forte pluie. Une foule considérable d'habitants de Versailles bordait de chaque côté l'avenue qui conduit au château. Les femmes de Paris formaient divers attroupements."[63] He said the group was "reçu avec honneur" but "au lieu de six femmes auxquelles j'avais promis l'entrée au chateau, il fallut en admettre douze."[64]

At least two of the women who were admitted to the chateau did not arrive there with the delegation from the National Assembly. The testimony of Francoise Rolin stated that "pendant que les autres femmes sont allées à l'Assemblée nationale, elle et la nommée Louison Chabry sont restées sur la place d'armes; que de cette place elles virent venir de loin cinq particuliers vêtus de noir et suivis par beaucoup de femmes qui étaient venues avec elle déposante." She went on to say that she and Chabry approached the men and that she, Rolin, "se jeta aux pieds de l'un d'eux, en lui disant qu'elles étaient perdues, et qu'elles désiraient aller au roi." She was then assured by the man who had identified himself as president of the Assembly, "qu'elles n'avaient qu'à le suivre." She went on to say that she was one of four women admitted with the deputies to see the king.[65] Louise Chabry said in her deposition that five women were introduced to the king along with the deputies. It was she who presented "les doléances des femmes et du peuple au roi, pour lui demander du pain et du subsistances." She also reported that the king had received them with "une très grande affabilité" but she gave no details of the discussion which took place. She did say, however, that she grew weak in the presence of the king and that "sa Majesté lui a fait donner du vin dans un gobelet d'or."[66] Mounier, on the other hand, said that the response of the king to the group "n'était absolument relative qu'aux subsistances de Paris" and that that was the main topic of discussion.[67]

Rolin testified that while Chabry went in with the others to meet with the king, she was questioned by a man she believed to be Saint Priest, a minister of the king. He asked her why the women had come to Versailles and "elle lui répondit qu'elles venaient pour apprendre au roi que sa bonne ville de Paris manquait de pain." Rolin said that when she and Chabry returned to the group of women waiting in the courtyard they received a very negative reception. She testified "que Louise Chabry était sortie avec des papiers que le roi lui avait fait remettre, et que la déposante était descendue avec elle et avaient été rejoindre les autres femmes qui étaient venues de Paris et qui étaient restées en dehors de la grille du château." According to Rolin, the women were very displeased when she and Chabry showed them the paper that the king had given them and told how the king had received them. "<Ces femmes> supposèrent que la déposante et Louison Chabry avaient reçu de l'argent du roi <et> dirent que ces papiers n'étaient pas signe de lui; et quoiqu'en retournant leurs poches."[68] Chabry testified that she hardly had time to say anything to the group of women when "des femmes qui étaient là l'ont maltraitée de coups de pieds et de poing, lui ont passé une jarretière au col pour la pendre à un réverbère."[69] Both women showed that they had no money but were only saved from hanging due to intervention by two body guards and two sympathetic women who rescued them just in time. Rolin testified that "après cela, Chabry et elle sont remontées dans les appartemens où le roi a signé les papiers."[70] According to Chabry, the king appeared with her on the balcony and supported her in her declaration that she had not received any money. Rolin stated that the papers were then given to one of the deputies who, followed by the women, carried them back to the National Assembly. She concluded by saying that at ten o'clock she left for Paris with a group of women "dans les voitures que le roi avait ordonné qu'on leur donnât." Chabry testified that at 11:30 p.m., just as Lafayette and the National Guard were arriving from Paris, she and thirty-nine other women left Versailles and returned to Paris in coaches supplied by the king.[71]

At about eight o'clock Mounier had returned with the deputation from the meeting with the king. Maillard stated in his testimony that Mounier "rapporta les paroles du roi, que toute l'assemblée entendit, et que le peuple parut respecter, puisqu'elles ne tendaient qu'à rétablir la tranquillité parmi son peuple."[72] It is interesting that several of the women claimed to have carried the king's decrees back to Paris. Madeleine Glain, faiseuse de ménages, who had marched with the women from Paris, stated that she and Maillard and two other women returned to the Hôtel de Ville in Paris and reported on the decrees that had been given to them at the National Assembly.[73] Louise Chabry stated in her testimony that she was in charge of a paper given to her by the king and that "elle a remis a M. le Maire, à son retour à Paris, à deux heures du matin."[74] It is possible that Chabry was one of the group that accompanied Maillard back to Paris later that evening.[75]

Many women, however, remained in Versailles for the night. According to Madame de la Tour du Pin, "les femmes qui avaient envahi le ministère, après avoir mangé ce qu'on avait pu leur procurer, dormaient couchées par terre dans les cuisines. Un grand nombre pleuraient, disaient qu'on les avait fait marcher de force et qu'elles ne savaient pas pourquoi elles étaient venues. Il paraît que les chefs féminins s'étaient réfugiées dans la salle de l'Assemblée nationale, où elles restèrent toute la nuit pêle-mêle avec les deputés qui se relayaient pour établir la permanence."[76]

Lafayette arrived at Versailles shortly before midnight with three contingents of the National Guard and a crowd of followers which included some women. He assured the king that although the National Guard supported the people of Paris in its efforts to obtain food, they would not stand by and see the royal family harmed. The next morning his words were put to the test. At about 6:30 a.m. a crowd of women entered the palace by way of an unguarded door, rushed up the stairs, and made their way to the apartments of the king and queen. Madame de la Tour du Pin stated that at daybreak her husband was at the window of their apartment in the château when he heard the sound of many footsteps on the ramp leading to the main courtyard. He observed "une foule de misérables déguenillés" enter by a gate which should have been locked. One of the king's bodyguards, M. de Vallori, was killed immediately at the gate leading to the cour des princes. She said that the crowd numbered fewer than two hundred and that the bodyguards could have fired but they did nothing. The Swiss guards who usually stood at the top of the marble staircase had been reduced to only one, according to this witness, who lamented the sense of security which led to few precautions having been taken against the possibility of violence by the crowd.[77] It appears that the château was inadequately guarded. Lafayette had placed around the château roughly the same number of guards that he would use in peacetime and there were only about twenty of the king's bodyguards left in the vicinity. The rest had been sent to the Trianon and Rambouillet. As the unruly crowd approached the chateau they hurled insults at a bodyguard who fired and killed a young man, Jérôme l'Héritier. This infuriated the demonstrators, one or several of whom immediately decapitated the unfortunate bodyguard whom they believed to be responsible. His head was put on a pike for transport to Paris, along with that of another bodyguard killed the night before in the altercation in front of the Salle des Menus Plaisirs. Meanwhile the rest of the crowd made its way up the main staircase of the château. One of the bodyguards warned the queen and her ladies in waiting of the approaching danger. They managed to escape, the queen seeking refuge in the king's apartment.[78]

A bodyguard of the king, François-Aimé de Miomandre de Sainte-Marie, testified at the Châtelet inquiry that he saw enter the chateau, by way of the cour des princes, "une multitude de gens armés de piques, de bâtons et autres armes." He described the violence and panic that followed as he made his way to the queen's apartment to warn her of the imminent danger.[79] Another eye-witness, Elisabeth Girard, who had come with the women from Paris, testified that she had seen the brutal murder of one of the bodyguards.[80] Henriette-Adelaide Genet, lady-in-waiting to the queen, testified that she had heard at about 6:15 a.m. "un bruit occasionné par des femmes qui passaient sous les fenêtres de l'appartement de la reine." Fifteen minutes later, she testified, she was implored by the bodyguard, Miomandre, to save the queen. She and another lady-in-waiting, Madame Thibault, helped the queen escape to the king's apartments and accompanied her there.[81] The king had in the meantime collected his children and returned to his apartment. The family then appeared together on the balcony. The National Guard managed to restore order and the crowd cheered the royal family.

The testimony of Jeanne Martin, femme Lavarenne, sheds more light on the activities of the women. She says that after spending the night in the meeting room of the Assembly where "rien passe contre l'honnêteté et la décence" she and two other women made their way first thing in the morning to the Place d'Armes and then to the château. They were just in time to see the populace begin to assemble there in "grand nombre." They witnessed the murder of two bodyguards and saw one of them beheaded. Martin said that although this was done by men they saw other bodyguards "également menacés par les femmes." She reported that she was wounded by a blow to her right arm which she received while trying to divert a blow from a bodyguard. Martin described the attitude of the queen as she viewed the scene in the courtyard from the balcony. "La reine est fâchée de voir ce qu'elle voit devant ses yeux; elle a été trompée; elle promet qu'elle ne le sera plus; elle promet d'aimer son peuple, d'y être attachée comme Jésus Christ l'est a son église."[82]

The people heard their king, "le coeur brisé de douleur," agree to go to Paris. When he appeared on the balcony, the crowd "s'écrie, comme par inspiration, le roi à Paris, le roi à Paris," to which the king responded, "Mes enfans, vous me demandez à Paris, j'irai; mais à condition que ce sera avec ma femme et mes enfans."[83] The queen, looking faint as she left the chateau to embark on the journey to Paris, clutched at the robes of the king. One of the women shouted, "tu as raison de le tenir, le roi; tiens-le ferme, c'est ton sauveur."[84] At about one o'clock the procession left Versailles for Paris. Women constituted a good proportion of the crowd that accompanied the royal family on its journey. "Des femmes portant des hautes branches de peuplier, ouvraient la marche; une centaine de gardes nationaux à cheval vinrent ensuite, puis les grenadiers et les fusiliers; les canons étaient entre chaque compagnie, qui était entremêlées de femmes, de gardes-du-corps, des soldats du régiment de Flandre."[85] This group was followed by fifty to sixty wagons of grain and flour, which were followed immediately by the carriages of the court, surrounded by deputies, cavalry, grenadiers and women. Faydel testified at the Châtelet inquiry that he left the Assembly "pour voir ce qui se passait sur l'avenue de Paris où l'on faisait, pour ainsi dire, un feu roulant, filer les gardes nationales, emmenant plusieurs gardes-du-corps qui partaient des bonnets de grenadiers, et quantité d'hommes et de femmes armés de sabres et de piques." In the middle of this spectacle were the king and the royal family. According to the witness the cortège had "plutôt l'air du deuil et de la tristesse que d'une marche royale."[86]

Bailly said that the women in the procession, "entremêlées de forts de la halle," carried long branches of laurel which created an effect "très pittoresque parmi les fusils et les piques." As they approached Paris they pointed with one hand to the wagons of flour and with the other to the royal family. "Mes amis, disaient-elles à la multitude, nous ne manquerons plus de pain, nous vous amenons le boulanger, la boulangère, et le petit mitron."[87] The procession arrived in Paris at about eight o'clock in the evening. The city was lighted by lamps in windows in celebration of the king's return and the royal family was welcomed with cheers and shouts of approbation. Bailly presented the keys of the city to the king who accepted them and responded graciously to the mayor's welcoming address. "Je me trouverai toujours avec plaisir et confiance au milieu des citoyens de ma bonne Ville de Paris."[88]

Bailly recounted how he relayed this message incompletely to the audience, omitting the word "confiance" and how the queen and then the king corrected him.[89] After the official welcome accorded the family in the Grand Salle of the Hôtel de Ville was finished and the crowd had responded with great applause, the royal family departed at about nine o'clock for the Tuileries. The crowd, including the women, dispersed for the night.

The women reappeared the next day at the Tuileries, demanding to see the queen. In an episode that is little known, they presented Marie Antoinette with their concerns. Madame Campan, lady-in-waiting to the queen, stated that "Le 7 octobre au matin, les mêmes femmes qui, la veille, montées sur des canons, environnaient la voiture de l'auguste famille prisonnière et l'accablaient d'injures, vinrent se placer sur la terrasse du château sous les fenêtres de la reine, en demandant à la voir." The queen appeared and one of the women in the group addressed her saying "qu'il fallait maintenant qu'elle éloignât d'elle tous ces courtisans qui perdent les rois, et qu'elle aimât les habitans de sa bonne ville." The queen responded "qu'elle les avait aimés a Versailles, et les aimerait de même à Paris." Another woman then accused her of wishing to attack and bombard the city on July 14 and of hoping to flee the country on October 6. To this the queen replied "qu'on le leur avait dit, et qu'elles l'avaient cru; que c'était là ce qui faisait le malheur du peuple, et celui du meilleur des rois." A third women spoke to Marie Antoinette in German and the queen responded that "elle était si bien devenue française qu'elle avait même oublié sa langue maternelle." She received great applause for this statement from the group, according to Madame de Campan, with many "bravos" and "des battemens de mains." The exchange ended with the queen giving the ribbons and flowers from her hat to the women who shared them and continued to shout, "Vive Marie-Antoinette! Vive notre bonne reine" for more than half an hour.[90] Of this meeting it has also been said that the women spoke to the queen as they would to anyone, with the same freedom. "Elles ne furent ni plus timides, ni plus hardies avec Louis XVI, depuis la Révolution, qu'elles ne l'auraient été avec Louis XVI revenant vainqueur de son expédition de Hollande."[91] Of this meeting, Marie Antoinette wrote on October 7 that the people had come to the Tuileries and had requested that the royal family remain in Paris. "Je leur ai dit de la part du roi, qui était à côté de moi, qu'il dependait d'eux que nous restions, que nos ne demandions pas mieux, que toute haine devait cesser, que le moindre sang répandu nous ferait fuir avec horreur. Les plus près m'ont juré que tout était fini. J'ai dit aux poissardes d'aller répéter tout ce que nous venions de vous dire."[92] It might be noted here as well that Madame Tourzel, lady-in-waiting to the queen, insisted that the queen refused steadfastly to make any comments on the events of those days. When the Commune of Paris, in their investigations, sent a deputation some weeks later to Marie Antoinette, she refused to speak against the subjects of the king. Her reply to a deputation from the Chatelet was essentially the same. "I have seen all, known all, forgotten all."[93]

The question of exactly who the women were who went to Versailles has proven difficult to answer. The depositions given before the Châtelet inquiry provide some information, but opinions vary. Descriptions range from "une femme d'une classe au dessus du médiocre" to those who appeared to be "assez bien mises," from "poissardes and canaille" to one "qui ne paraissait pas être du commun."[94] One witness testified that there were present "très peu que l'on put ranger parmi la classe de la vile populace."[95] Mention is made of "une femme assez jolie qui avait un sabre nu à la main et qui assemblait d'autres femmes."[96] This might be a reference to Reine Audu, who was known to be one of the leaders in the march and who was later imprisoned for her part in the events. It might also have been Théroigne de Méricourt, who was living at Versailles that summer and was present in the streets that day.[97]

It seems likely that the crowd represented a cross section of the population. Many of the women who were there testified later at the Châtelet that they were forced to march. Almost none of the female witnesses accepted any responsibility for participating in the events of the October Days. Jeanne Martin (Lavarenne), noted for her energetic confrontations with the king's guards both in Paris and at Versailles, insisted when questioned that she had been forced to go.[98] Marie Pierre Louvain (Collinet) testified that "le lundi 5 octobre dernier, sur le dix heures du matin, elle a été entraînée, ainsi que des autres femmes, par une foule de femmes à Versailles."[99] Francoise Miallou (Carpentier) testified that "sur les dix heures du matin, comme elle sortait de chez elle pour vaquer à ses affaires, elle a été entraînée par une foule de femmes qui passaient dans la rue Montorgueil, et conduite à Versailles."[100]

Marie-Catherine-Victoire Sacleux (Némery) testified that "le samedi, le dimanche, et le lundi matin, ne pouvant d'avoir du pain, sa boutique fermée à la clameur publique, et ayant entendu dire que les femmes allaient à l'hôtel-de-ville pour avoir du pain, elle y est allée." She said that she found there "une infinité de femmes du peuple qui, après quelques propos, dirent qu'il fallait aller à Versailles." She did not wish to go to Versailles and she "prétexta qu'elle était mal chausée, qu'il fallait qu'elle s'en retournât chez elle." The women would not listen to this and Sacleux testified "qu'elles l'obligèrent même, avec d'autres, à traîner l'une des trois canons qui étaient place de grève, ce qu'elle fit jusqu'à Sèvres."[101] Catherine Potheau reported that she was forced to go on the journey. According to her testimony "elle a été entraînée à Versailles par une foule immense de femmes." The testimony of Anne Forêts is almost identical. She said that she too "a été entraînée par une foule immense de femmes à Versailles." Even Louise Chabry, star of the meeting with the king, maintained in her testimony that she had not wanted to go to Versailles. "<Elle> dépose que le lundi matin, cinq octobre dernier, étant porte Sainte-Antoine avec ses père & mère, elle a été forcée par des femmes du peuple à les suivre à Versailles." Françoise Rolin also "dépose que le cinq octobre dernier, entre sept & huit heures du matin, lorsqu'elle sortait de chez sa mère . . . elle fut arrêtée par plusieurs femmes de la halle, qu'elle ne connaît pas particulièrement, qui lui dirent qu'il fallait qu'elle aller avec elles; qu'elle leur demanda où elles voulaient la conduire ; elles lui repondirent que c'était . . . à Versailles." Marguerite Paton testified that "le lundi cinq octobre dernier, dans la matinée, passant rue de l'Arbre-sec, elle a été entraînée par les femmes du peuple de Paris, à Versailles" and that "<elle> ne peut designer les personnes qui l'ont forcée." Elisabeth Girard "dépose que le lundi 5 octobre dernier, sur le midi, plusieurs femmes sont montees chez la déposante pour lui dire qu'elles allaient à la ville, et la forcèrent de la suivre, en la menaçant de lui couper les cheveux, si elle ne marchait pas." Jeanne-Dorothy Délaissement also said she was forced "comme beaucoup d'autres femmes" by the crowd who wished to go to Versailles.[102] None of the witnesses named a specific leader or group of instigators. Every witness, according to testimony, had been coerced by a group of nameless women.

Although information is limited, it seems possible to conclude from the existing records that among those who marched, supposedly under duress, to Versailles, there were some middle class women. To name a few for whom records exist, Françoise Maillou was "marchande de toilette" and Marie Pierre Louvain was "marchande de huîtres". Women of the working class included Marie-Catherine-Victoire Sacleux who was "maîtresse teinturiere," Catherine Potheau, a "fille de boutique," as was Anne Forets, and

Louison Chabry who was formerly "ouvrière en sculpture" but was now a flower-seller. Madeleine Glain was a housekeeper and Jeanne Martin (Lavarenne) was a nurse. It appears also that many types of working women were present including market women, housewives, portieres, et femmes de metier." Some historians have claimed that there were prostitutes in the crowd, but there is no evidence to support this. Although many of the women who testified before the Chatelet appear to have been reasonably literate and articulate, there were many testimonies at the Châtelet which recalled violent and vulgar threats which were made against the queen during the march. It becomes clear from the depositions that many of the women held the queen responsible for the political problems which the country faced and that any loyalty they might have felt for the king did not extend to her. Jean-Claude de Forget, Commandant-Général de la fauconnerie du roi, testified that "vers sept heures de la meme soirée <5 octobre>, étant dans la rue Satory, il vit passer beaucoup de poissardes, ou femmes du peuple, qui se dechainaient en propos tres-indecens contre la Reine; qu'une d'elle particulièrement ayant un couteau à la main, qu'elle éguisait sur une bonne, disait qu'elle serait heureuse si elle pouvait lui ouvrir le ventre avec ce couteau, et lui arracher le coeur, en fournant le bras jusqu'au coude, ce qu'elle accompagnait d'un geste démonstratif."[103] Another witness, Charles-François Bernardy, one of the king's bodyguards, testified that a woman said to him, "ce n'est pas du pain que nous demandons, c'est du sang qu'il nous faut: vous êtes tous des gueux, votre reine est une coquine, et nous voulons sa peau pour en faire des rubans de districts."[104] Antoine-Jacques Perin testified that "<les femmes> l'ont entouré, et lui ont demandé où il allait; à quoi il leur répondit qu'il les suivait, mais qu'il ne savait quelle était la cause de leur voyage à Versailles; alors une de ces femmes et plusieurs même parlant ensemble, lui ont dit: Nous voulons voir Marie-Antoinette entre les deux yeux: la Polignac, la b....., avec son doigt, nous la b.....avec le bras, et nous lui enfoncerons jusqu'au coude, et que ce discours était accompagné de démonstrations." The witness added that each one wished to bring back something from Marie-Antoinette. "<Une> a dit j'en aurai une cuisse; une autre, j'en aurai les tripes; et en disant ces choses, plusieurs tendaient leurs tabliers comme si elles eussent eu dedans ce qu'elles se promettaient d'avoir, et, dans cette attitude, elles dansaient."[105] Anne-Marguerite Andelle testified that she saw a group of women in the courtyard of the chateau on October 5 and that "ces femmes ont continué...de vomir des imprécations contre le roi & la reine; qu'elles accusaient la reine d'avoir empoisonné M. le dauphin, & d'avoir dit qu'elle tremperait à main dans le sang des Français."[106] Jean-Marie Brousse de Faucherets testified that during the evening of October 5 some of the women who had come from Paris had asked for food and they ate a meal in the room adjoining the Salle des Menus Plaisirs. This witness, in a testimony which was obviously biased, said that he saw the women sitting around a table and "dans l'ivresse de leur joie, se livrèrent aux propos les plus scandaleux." He testified that he very distinctly heard one of them say, "Ah! cette petite Marie-Antoinette, si nous l'avions attrapée, nous l'aurions fait danser comme il faut" and then she added, "c'est bien ce qu'elle mérite, car elle seule est la cause de tous les maux que nous souffrons."[107] Another witness, Antoine-Louis-Joseph Girin de la Motte, testified that "entre Sevres et Viroflay il rencontra beaucoup de peuple qui cheminait vers Versailles, ainsi que quatre soldats du regiment de Flandre: les premiers criaient (et notamment les femmes): Qu'elles emmèneraient la reine morte ou vive."[108] Elisabeth Girard in her testimony described the mayhem of the morning of October 6 and the murder of a bodyguard and said that during all this time she had heard "des paroles abominables contre la reine jusqu'au moment où le roi ayant promis de se rendre à Paris avec sa famille, le trouble s'est apaisé."[109]

As well as reports of threats against the queen, there is evidence that some women in the group were less than enthusiastic about the presence of men on the journey. As the march began to take shape on the morning of October 5 there were already comments of a negative nature about men attempting to join the group. Maillard in his testimony spoke of the attitudes of the women gathering at the Hôtel de Ville that morning, testifying "que ces femmes répétaient que les hommes n'avaient point assez de force pour se venger et qu'elles montreraient mieux que les hommes." He added that upon his arrival at the Place de Grève he was unable to enter the Hôtel de Ville because "il était occupé par une affluence de femmes qui ne voulaient pas d'hommes parmi elles."[110] In a letter written following the October Days, one woman stated that "le 5 octobre dernier, les parisiennes ont prouvé aux hommes qu'elles etaient pour le moins aussi braves qu'eux, et aussi entreprenantes. L'histoire et cette grande journée m'ont déterminés à vous faire une motion très-importante pour l'honneur de notre sexe. Remettons les hommes dans leur chemin, et ne souffrons pas qu'avec leurs systèmes d'égalité et de liberté, avec leurs declarations de droits, ils nous laissent dans l'état d'inférioritе; disons vrai, d'esclavage, dans lequel ils nous retiennent depuis si long-temps."[111] Bailly said of the women gathered in the Place de Grève on the morning of October 5 that "toutes criaient qu'elles ne voulaient point d'hommes avec elles."[112]

Although Lafayette and the National Guard accompanied by a crowd of Parisians also made the journey to Versailles, leaving Paris in the late afternoon of October 5, it is the first group, the one led by Maillard, which is of major importance here because such a large proportion of the participants were women. Accounts of contemporary journals confirm that women were in the majority and some journals attempted to estimate the size of the crowd. Le Courrier Français, Les Revolutions de Paris, Les Annales

Patriotiques et Littéraires all estimated that the crowd numbered 4000 to 5000. Le Journal de Versailles et Paris said that there were about 3000 in the crowd. L'Observateur estimated 1000 were present.[113] Marie Rose Bare testified at the Châtelet that she was stopped on the Pont Notre Dame by "une centaine de femmes" who forced her to march with them to Versailles. Maillard estimated the number at 6000 to 7000 and said that most were women. Lourdet, in his testimony, estimated that the crowd was 400 to 500 strong. Louise Chabry set the number at 500 to 600. Claude Louis, Comte de Chatre, a deputy in the National Assembly, estimated in his testimony that he saw between 500 and 600 men and women armed with pikes in the cour des ministres at daybreak on October 6.[114] Bailly placed the numbers at 4,000 women and 400 to 500 men.[115] It is difficult to draw conclusions from such a variety of estimates. It is agreed, however, that the group was large and was composed mainly of women and that the men who were present played only a supporting role, just as the women had anticipated when they left for Versailles believing that "les hommes viendraient ensuite" and "leur aideraient à amener le roi et la reine à Paris."[116]

Historians have debated not only the size of the crowd but the question of whether or not the episode was planned in advance, instigated by the Duc d'Orléans, and carried out by his hirelings.[117] Although some witnesses at the Châtelet testified that some men of Orléans' entourage had been among the demonstrators and others said that some women were paid to go to

Versailles,[118] it has never been shown definitively that there was such a plot involving the Duc d'Orléans. Rather, evidence points strongly toward an uprising of a spontaneous nature. Few if any of the women who assembled on the morning of October 5 at the Place de Grève had been paid to do so. Judging from the testimony at the Châtelet and from eye-witness accounts, they came from all walks of life in response to the call from the streets. The oft-repeated claim of forced participation is easy to understand in the circumstances of the Châtelet inquiry. Imprisonment was the fate of those women who had an enthusiastically high profile during the action, too high, that is, to support any subsequent denial. One such was Reine Audu, who made her reputation as a street activist during the October Days. After the Châtelet inquiry she spent almost a year in prison. The women on the march were for the most part unprepared for the journey. Some had not eaten for many hours and were without money, but as testimony has shown, even in this condition there were present many who were enthusiastic participants with a penchant for political slogans and who demonstrated a great desire to see their king at Versailles. Testimony that there were men dressed as women in the crowd undeniably exists and is often used in support of the Orleanist plot theory. There is evidence, however, that shows that these men were not at the Place de Grève on October 5 until later in the day.[119]

That the October Days were primarily days of political expression and political growth for women is borne out by the testimonies of Marie Rose Bare, Louison Chabry, and Françoise Rolin. Their words demonstrate that they had made the connection in their thinking between the immediate shortage of bread in the capital and the shortcomings of the existing political system, and also bear witness to the truth of the statement that "elles voulaient du pain, mais non pas au prix de la liberté."[120] The depositions illustrate the greatly expanded role that the women played once they had reached Versailles. Their simple stated goal of alleviating the shortage of food was transformed into a political involvement with more than one dimension. The issue of bread spurred the women to action and brought about the gathering of the female crowd, but they were still very much aware of other realities as well. They went on to voice complaints in the Assembly about the abuse of the highly symbolic cockade and to complain that the promulgation of the Constitution was being delayed by the clergy. Their performance there, although so effective that one of the deputies suggested, in all seriousness, that the women should be allowed to vote with the deputies,[121] was only the beginning. It was at the meeting with the king that the individual women shone. Demonstrating an unexpected sophistication and preparedness, they conversed with the king and ministers of the king in a quite astonishing manner. Keeping in mind that these were women of the people mixed with some from the bourgeoisie, and also realizing the reverence with which they regarded royalty, their ability to present their concerns was truly surprising. It is certain that they had not only made the connection in their minds between the shortage of bread in the capital and the existing political system, but also that they possessed sensibilities and understanding in a political sense that reached beyond any objective that had thus far been articulated. Marie Rose Bare, ouvriere en dentelles, in testifying that on October 5 at about eight a.m. she was stopped on her way to work by a group of about a hundred women who insisted that she must go with them to ask for bread, described also the larger role she played once arrived at Versailles. According to Bare she was one of four women chosen to meet with the king and the case was obviously well presented. The women, said Bare, first were able to carry on a discussion with Saint-Priest, one of the king's ministers who was in the king's anti-chamber at the time,[122] and then the women proceeded to present their concerns to the king. Bare said that "elles demandèrent du pain" and "Sa Majesté leur repondit qu'elle souffrait autant qu'elles, de voir qu'elles en manquaient." The women then explained to the king that the convoys of wagons carrying flour to Paris needed an escort because they had been told that "de soixante-dix voitures qui étaient destinées pour Paris, deux seulement y étaient entrées." The results were immediate and quite dramatic. The king promised "de faire escorter des farines, et que s'il dépendait de lui, elles auraient du pain sur-le-champ."[123] Other women who also claimed at the Châtelet that they had been forced to march showed that they later were chosen to meet with the king at Versailles and that once there they very ably confronted him with their specific grievances and expressed specific political concerns during the encounter. They knew exactly why they were there and exactly what they wanted and they had no problem in articulating their concerns. Even Louison Chabry, the seventeen-year-old flower seller who fainted in the presence of the king, was nevertheless able to express her grievances. She knew exactly why she was at Versailles. Whereas Bare testified that she was one of four women introduced to the king, Chabry said "qu'arrivées à Versailles, cinq d'elles ont été introduites avec des députés chez le roi." She testified "que c'est elle, déposante, qui a eu l'honneur de porter les doléances des femmes et du peuple au roi, pour lui demander du pain et des subsistances; que sa majesté la reçueavec une très-grande affabilité, et nombre de bontés." The testimony of Françoise Rolin stated that she told Saint-Priest, in response to his questions, that the women had come to apprise the king of the shortage of bread in Paris.[124] Rolin, like Bare, testified that four of them went in to see the king. She said that at first she was not allowed to enter, that one of the twelve Swiss guards at the door of the king's chambers pushed her and she fell to the floor. The Comte d'Estaing discovered her crying on a bench and led her by the hand into a room where there were several men, one of whom was the Duc de Gèvres. Saint-Priest was also there. When questioned by him, Rolin quite ably explained the purpose of the women's journey to Versailles, "qu'elles venaient pour apprendre le roi que la bonne ville de Paris manquait de pain." When questioned further, she explained that the women had attempted to make the same demand in Paris but there was no one at the Hôtel de Ville. Rolin, like Chabry and Bare, demonstrated that she was highly aware of her purpose in Versailles and that she understood and was able to communicate the need for political intervention.

Another major goal that the women had articulated from the time they left Paris, and even before, was that of bringing the king back to the capital so that he would reside at the Louvre among his subjects. They felt that if he were there, closer to his people than he could be at Versailles, their government and therefore their lives would be greatly improved. Also they would be able to watch closely over his activities. When the royal family appeared on the balcony on the morning of October 6 the cry that went up from the crowd was, "Le roi à Paris!" The next day, after the royal family was settled in the palace of the Tuileries, Marat wrote in his journal that it was "une fête pour les bons Parisiens de posséder enfin leur roi." The king's presence, he proclaimed, "va faire bien promptement changer les choses de face" and "le pauvre peuple ne mourra plus de faim." As for the king, "<il> partage la joie de ses chers concitoyens."[125] Francoise Rolin recounted that once back at the National Assembly she and some other women said "qu'elles désiraient que le roi vînt à Paris" because there "il connaîtrait mieux ce qui s'y passait et que les affaires en iraient mieux." At this point one of the men present "leur ont dit de se taire, qu'elles ne savaient ce qu'elles demandaient".[126] Such evidence demonstrates that the deputies felt threatened when the women made political statements of this type. Another witness, Madeleine Glain, testified that she was forced to march, but then explained that once there she was chosen to meet with the king, proceeded to communicate with him on the topic of subsistances, carried the decrees from the king back to the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, and then went to the Oratoire district to impart the news that the king had signed the decrees and had promised to safeguard the provisioning of the city. This was a role of no small importance for someone who had supposedly gone unexpectedly to Versailles and was therefore totally unprepared for what might happen there. Madeleine Glain demonstrated a good deal of awareness in her performance during the October Days which negates the possibility of total political ignorance or mere chance.

It can be said after careful study of the roles of these and other female participants that although they attempted to minimize the importance of their activities, claimed they had been forced to march, and tried to camouflage details of their intrusion into the National Assembly, there can be little doubt that the women were indeed active and enthusiastic participants in the October Days. They were in fact credited with liberating France: "La Providence seule nous a sauvés, et par les moyens les plus faibles, pour que nous en rapportassions toute la gloire. Elle a inspiré aux femmes la resolution d'affranchir la Patrie, elle les y a fait réussir; elles ont obtenu du Roi qu'il vint habiter au milieu de nous, il n'en fallait pas davantage."[127] The women were insisting on new roles within the new nation and took seriously the possibilities presented by the changing times. They were determined that the king should listen to their grievances and demands. They masked the facts of their participation for obvious reasons when they were later questioned at the Châtelet inquiry. Their actions belie their words, however, and show that the women were willing and informed political participants, and although this participation was still in its fledgling form, there can be little doubt that they were heading in the direction of a wider involvement in the revolutionary arena.

Chapter III

Women and Revolutionary Politics

A. Women and the Clubs.

After the women brought the king to Paris on October 6, 1789, the National Assembly soon followed and established itself in the Salle du Manège, where it proceeded to carry out its self-ordained task of formulating a constitution for France. A sense of calm settled over the country, buttressed by the wider availability of bread and a decline in prices. After the months of crisis the insurgents of 1789, women as well as men, returned to their more normal pursuits. But the political ferment of 1789 continued to find expression at all levels of society, and in various forms. One was the series of mass public demonstrations, or fetes, celebrating notable dates and themes of the Revolution, in which women as well as men participated. Perhaps the most famous of these was the Fête de la Fédération at the Champ de Mars in Paris on July 14, 1790, the first anniversary of the capture of the Bastille; contemporary illustrations of the scene include many women among the thousands of participants. And among the many new images reflecting the revolutionary fervor, the female figure of "Liberty" soon became a predominant symbol.[1] Another more practical and continuing form of political activity involving women was the organization of a great number and variety of political and "popular" societies and clubs. Most of these organizations, like the National Assembly itself and the Breton Club, that ancestor of the Jacobins that had first met as a caucus of the Third Estate in Versailles in May of 1789, were at first exclusively male in membership. Soon, however, women began to appear as spectators in clubs such as the Cordeliers and the Jacobins in Paris. It was in these surroundings that much of the women's political growth was to take place. From the beginning the Société des Cordeliers allowed women to observe and even to speak, but not to vote. However, some clubs soon opened their membership to women as well as to men, and as early as the end of 1789 a few clubs made up exclusively of women began to appear.

Paris was naturally the center of this "mixed" and female club activity, but important mixed and female clubs were also organized in Lyon and in many other provincial towns. Historians have identified more than thirty women's political clubs in cities such as Lyon, Dijon, and Bordeaux (though not in Marseille), and in many other places scattered throughout France, with a concentration for reasons as yet unexplained in the southwest, in towns such as Bayonne, Pau, Montauban and Damazan.[2]

In January 1790, in Paris, Théroigne de Méricourt founded the short-lived Amis de la Loi, a fraternal society which was to allow both men and women to actively participate. The group was to be a "société politique" and would gather "les rayons épars de l'opinion publique, et dissiper les nuages dont les âmes noires, viles et hypocrites, s'efforcent de l'obscurcir pour alarmer le peuple."[3] Although the society did not last long, Théroigne managed to address a meeting of the Cordeliers Club in February of that year with a proposal that a new building be constructed to house the National Assembly in a good deal more grandeur than the Manège provided.[4] Although her suggestion did not live to see the light of day, the action is noteworthy in that a woman made such an address at that time.

November of 1790 witnessed the beginnings of the mixed club in Paris that later took the name of the Societe Fraternelle de Patriotes des Deux Sexes. Claude Dansard, "un pauvre maître de pension," at first organized meetings in a room at the Jacobin monastery for "plusieurs artisans et marchands de fruits et de légumes du quartier," some of whom attended accompanied by their wives and children. The principal purpose of the meetings was to read and discuss decrees of the National Assembly.[5] The gatherings provided the women with a true political setting. In March of 1791 this group took the name of Societe Fraternelle de Patriotes des Deux Sexes. This particular organization soon increased rapidly in respect to both its membership and popularity and other fraternal societies proliferated in Paris in the months that followed. One of the first was the Societé Populaire de Mauconseil which later took the name of Societe Fraternelle des Halles when it moved its meetings to that quarter. There were also the Société fraternelle des Minimes and that of Nomophiles, both founded in the early months of 1791. These met in the section of the Palais Royal. Prudhomme, the antifemale editor of the *Révolutions de Paris*, established the Societe des Indigents which accepted women as members. His actions there belied the thrust of his journal, for he had his wife preside as president. At about the same time the Societe Fraternelle des Amis des Droits de l'Homme Ennemie du Despotisme was established. In 1792 the Société Fraternelle de Saint-Geneviève became the Société Fraternelle des Deux Sexes du Panthéon-Francais.[6] It was in these clubs which welcomed women as members that the basis was established for the process of their politicization. Here in the popular fraternal societies many women took their first steps toward becoming vocal and informed participants in the new social and political order.

The role of the women in La Société Fraternelle des Deux Sexes, Séante au Jacobins, Saint-Honoré is the one for which the most information is available. According to the Babillard, journal of the Abbe Fauchet's "cercle social," the women were participating "au même titre que les hommes, aux déliberations et aux élections."[7] Two of them acted as secretaries. Their duty was to examine the list of aspiring members and organize their introductions to the society. Four men fulfilled the same function for their sex and a secretary for each group, male and female, was seated on either side of the president. The women were able, like the men, to present "tous ceux et celles qui sollicitaient leur admission." The women participated "sur un pied d'égalité" with the men, with six members of each gender comprising a "comité de conciliation" to examine issues and settle disputes. As well, women made up part of the delegations and commissions of the organization.[8] Although there is no evidence that any ever succeeded, it seems that women even aspired to the presidency. Babillard reported that a woman confronted the members with such a request. "Quelle différence entre les hommes et nous? Je demande que nous puissions être nommées non seulement au secrétariat et au commissariat, mais à la presidence." It was reported that the speaker was pretty so some applauded. One member was said to have commented that this acceptance of women was "le vrai moyen de dissoudre la Société."[9]

The preamble to the club's regulations stated that "la societe fraternelle de patriotes des deux sexes, défenseurs de la constitution, pénétrée des principes de liberté d'égalité que la révolution a ramenée parmi nous, considérant que l'ignorance et le mépris des loix sont les seules causes qui peuvent préparer la ruine de la liberté et détruire notre propre ouvrage," the most formidable obstacle to the enemies of the nation "consiste dans la reunion fraternelle des amis de la constitution" who have in common their love of liberty and equality and who would peacefully discuss the public good. In matters of the maintenance of law and the conduct of public agents, "le peuple <avait> essentiellement le droit de demander compte de l'administration."[10]

This attitude was similar to that of Robespierre and Brissot, who protested against a decree of the Constituent Assembly of September 29, 1791 that proscribed the political participation of "passive citizens," a category which included all women as well as the poorer men in the popular societies.[11] There were thirty-nine articles in the original Règlement and two more were added later. The participation of women was ensured in the articles which delineated their functions. Article II stated that "tous les membres des deux sexes participeront aux déliberations et aux élections" and Article V made provision for "deux secrétaires élues dans les mêmes formes que dans article III <scrutins de liste>" and their functions would be "de tenir registre des présentations des soeurs qui voudront être admises dans la société." In elections "il sera nommée six scrutateurs des deux sexes." Article X made clear that admission requirements applied equally to both sexes: "Tous ceux et celles qui désirent être admis dans la société . . . seront appuyés par deux freres ou soeurs." The registration procedure for new members described in the following articles always referred to "frères ou soeurs." Article XII declared, "Tout frère, ou soeur, nouvellement reçu, sera interpellé par le président, au nom de la société, à prêter le serment civique, décreté par l'Assemblée nationale, ainsi conçu: je jure d'être fidèle à la nation, à la loi et au roi, et de maintenir de tout mon pouvoir la liberté francaise, et les droits de l'homme et du citoyen. Je promets d'être fidèle au règlement de la société, tant qu'il subsistera." The organization was obviously political in its direction and one of its priorities was to provide a political education for its members, both male and female.[12]

Among the members of the Société Fraternelle des Deux Sexes, one female member particularly stands out due to her dedication and involvement. The political education of women was one of the main concerns of Louise Keralio, later Louise Robert, who had begun publishing the Mercure nationale ou Journal d'Etat et du Citoyen in August, 1789. She was not limited in her vision of female participation to the modest role allowed women in the fraternal societies but aspired to larger things. She envisioned a humanitarian role for women in the clubs which would involve an active participation in improving the lot of the unfortunate. She proposed a system of hospital visits during which society members would evaluate and report on their observations to the Directory of the Department, to the municipality of Paris, to the forty-eight sections, and to all the patriotic societies of the realm together with an invitation to accord the information "la plus grande considération."[13]

It was not long before fears that the popular societies might become too powerful and influential began to surface. A pamphlet entitled Avis aux Francais sur les clubs warned of the dangers of allowing the clubs to wield so much influence. "De toute part on érige des clubs.... La fureur des clubs gagne toutes les classes, tous les âges, tous les sexes. Les artisans s'arrachent à leurs travaux pour déraisonner dans les clubs. Dans d'autres (à Alais) on voit des jeunes filles sacrifiée à la fureur du jour. Ailleurs les femmes elles-mêmes forment des clubs où elles apprennent à encenser la nouvelle idole du fanatisme.... La France entière ne sera bientôt plus qu'un club!"[14]

In the spring of 1791 the idea of associating all the fraternal societies under the umbrella of the Cordeliers was born.[15] In May the Comité Central des Sociétés Fraternelles was created with François Robert, husband of Louise Keralio, as president. From that day forward the women of the clubs were involved in a highly energetic and tenacious political movement which was to grow in strength and determination as the revolution progressed. Generally the fraternal clubs in both Paris and the provinces were concerned with a variety of activities which illustrated the growth of political awareness and dedication to political causes on the part of women. Their civic consciousness was illustrated by their enthusiastic participation in many fetes and they showed a concern for public welfare (particularly after the war against Austria began in April, 1792), an interest in civic instruction based on the idea that every individual must serve the nation as her first responsibility, and a concern for the education of young girls. Several times women claimed the right to bear arms for the nation. Pauline Leon appeared before the Legislative Assembly in March of 1792 with a petition signed by more than three hundred women of the Société Fraternelle des Minimes demanding the right to arm themselves for defense. The petition stated that the women's purpose was not to abandon the care of families and homes, but rather "nous voulons seulement être à même de nous défendre." Should women let themselves be slaughtered like lambs "sans avoir le droit de se défendre?" In case the enemy was victorious, would it not be cruel to condemn women to await, unarmed, she asked, in their houses, "une mort honteuse" accompanied by all the horrors that would precede it or perhaps "un malheur plus grand encore, celui de survivre à tout ce que nous avons de plus cher, à notre famille et à notre liberté?"[16] Only a few days later Théroigne de Méricourt, member of the Societe Fraternelle des Deux Sexes, proposed to the women of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine that a legion of armed women be formed. She reminded the women at the meeting of the Societe Fraternelle des Minimes that as women they were constantly in danger and stated that "nous nous devons toutes entières à la Patrie." The women, she said, must exhibit unity and fraternity and be wise and calm in their efforts. "Nous <préparons> avec autant de sagesse que de courage à repousser les attaques de nos ennemis." She continued, "Citoyennes, nous pouvons, par un généreux dévouement, rompre le fil de ces intrigues. Armons-nous; nous en avons le droit par la nature et même par la loi." Women must show men that they are their equals in both courage and virtue. "Montrons à l'Europe que les Françaises connaissent leurs droits, et sont a la hauteur des lumieres du dix-huitième siècle."[17] She went on to encourage women to fight at the sides of their men in order to repulse the enemies of liberty. "Françaises, le même sang coule toujours dans nos veines; ce que nous avons fait à Beauvais, à Versailles, les 5 et 6 octobre, et dans plusieurs autres circonstances importantes et décisives, prouve que nous ne sommes pas étrangères aux sentimens magnanimes."[18]

Meanwhile, in the provinces, the women were also in the process of organizing themselves for more effective participation. In Dijon the women had founded the Club des Femmes de Dijon in 1789. At Breteuil the young women had organized the Soeurs de la Constitution in August of 1790. Its regulation by civic authorities was strict. The mayor was to observe the meetings, but could act only as a consultant. At Aunay the women organized in the Légion des Amazones and remained undaunted in the face of opposition from soldiers and aristocrats. During the summer of 1791, the women of Bordeaux, three or four thousand strong, organized themselves into the Société des Amies de la Constitution and marched in a procession to present a bouquet to the constitutional bishop of Bordeaux. "Cette marche triomphale, escortée des troupes nationales et des soldats d'Agénois, était un spectacle nouveau, d'un caractère auguste, inspirant tout à la fois le respect et l'attendrissement, rappelant à l'imagination ces fêtes grecques dont nos religions modernes n'ont pas su tirer parti."[19]

At Tours the same summer six hundred women planned a procession to the Champ de Mars. A group of women would march in two lines with all mothers in the line on the right. It was decided that "la coiffure uniforme serait un pouf de gaze blanche, auquel serait attachée une cocarde de rubans aux coleurs nationales, les cheveux arrangés à la cavalière et chignon retroussé; que l'uniforme serait d'un caraco blanc, jupe de même, fendue tout au long sur le côte et lissée par un ruban vert pistache qui laisserait voir un transparent rose." Finally, it had been decreed that instead of a belt, "le ruban aux trois couleurs serait placé en echarpe."[20]

It was not long before the women of Paris, having done apprenticeship in the fraternal societies, were also responding with enthusiasm to the call for clubs that were uniquely female in membership. In these all-female assemblies the political education of women was to continue. The object here would be, as in the fraternal societies, to raise the political awareness of the membership. Although only two such clubs were to emerge in Paris, each was of importance in its own right. First came the Société Patriotique et Bienfaisance des Amies de la Vérité (March 1791) and later came the Société or Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires (May, 1793).

The first of these was an off-shoot of the Abbe Fauchet's "cercle social" which was founded at the Palais Royal in the autumn of 1790. Here he preached to a group that was largely composed of women, although it was in reality a fraternal society. In December, Etta Palm d'Aelders gave an address there in which she encouraged the women to take action in the public arena. Entitled "Discours sur l'injustice des lois en faveur des hommes, au dépens des femmes," her speech deplored the type of woman who gave herself over totally to the duties of household and family. She described women as being "sacrifiée a tous les préjugés," subjected early in life to the wills of their fathers, and later to the whims of their husbands. She felt that women were "victimes d'une éducation qui désarmait leur courage et étouffait leur esprit."[21] She proclaimed that women had been, up to the present time, "les compagnes d'hommes énervés de sentiments d'esclaves corrompus." Furthermore, she advocated that "puisque les Français sont devenues des Romains, imitons les vertus et la patriotisme des dames romaines."[22] It is not surprising that she should call shortly thereafter for popular societies composed of a strictly female membership. The following spring she founded in the same location the Société Patriotique et de Bienfaisance des Amies de la Vérité. In March, 1791, she requested that there be created in every section of the capital women's clubs which would enter into communication with all the fraternal societies of France. The Amis de la Vérité would oversee their activities and the heads of the assemblies would meet, under the supervision of the Amies, every week in a Directoire générale. These clubs would have a humanitarian as well as a political purpose. Their worthy goals were to be carried out within the context of a growing political understanding of the new Nation. Members would help the indigent, visit the sick, and watch over the education and nutrition of children.[23]

Enthusiastic women gathered at the office of the Cercle Social at five o'clock on the twenty-fifth of March, 1791, for the first meeting of the Amies. The birth of this first uniquely female club in Paris did not go unnoticed. In the Patriote Français of April 1, the editor, Brissot, commented on the formation of the "clubs patriotiques de citoyennes" at Bordeaux, Alais et Nantes and he added that "Paris méritait bien de posséder un institut aussi utile: il vient de s'en élever un dans l'assemblée fédérative."[24] About this time, Palm, as president of the Amies, gave a rousing speech to the men of the Cercle Social. She proclaimed that nature had created woman to be man's companion in his work and in his glory. "Si elle vous donna un bras plus nerveux, elle nous fit vos égales en force morale et vos supérieures peut-être par la vivacité de l'imagination, par la délicatesses des sentiments, par la résignation dans les revers, par la fermeté dans les douleurs, la patience dans les souffrances, enfin en générosité d'âme et zèle patriotique."[25] In May, she managed to receive permission from the Constituent Assembly for her group to hold meetings in one of the vacant convents in Paris. On the twenty-second of May her request for protection and support for the club was presented to the Directory of the department.[26] She then directed an address to the forty-eight sections to inform the people of the club's main objectives, in accordance with the broader goals of the

Revolution. In the interests of liberty, humanity, and equality she wished to form an institution to raise and educate young girls born into indigent families so that they could earn an honest living as adults. She asked that each section name two women to participate by disseminating their knowledge and contributing three livres a month. Not one section appears to have responded. Not to be discouraged, the Amies had a prospectus printed which they distributed widely in Paris. This brochure especially targeted the bishops and the curés and all persons known to be wealthy. This pamphlet dealt with the goals of the society in the following manner: "Dans le nouvel ordre des choses que nous devons à la Liberté, chaque individu peut et doit servir la Patrie. Vieillards, femmes, enfants, nul n'est sans moyens; il ne s'agit que de les développer, de les s'employer à propos et de remplacer des préjugés destructeurs par des vertus régéneratrices."[27]

Again the club received virtually no response with the exception of a magistrate who donated one hundred livres. Mainly the club had only the contributions of its members and after expenses it was left with only seven hundred livres to carry out its worthy objectives.[28] In April 1792, the society appealed once more for funds to give a second opportunity to those who regretted not having responded before. The response was as usual. It must be noted that the membership fee was very high for that time and this indicates that the women in the club were mainly bourgeoises.

Their poorer sisters, for whom they showed much concern and on whose behalf they were prepared to work diligently, obviously could not have afforded the dues. The club dissolved sometime during the autumn months of 1792 and Etta Palm left France in November and took up residence in Holland.[29]

After King Louis XVI accepted the new Constitution in September of 1791, women's activities entered a different phase. Despite their contributions to the cause of the Revolution during the October days and afterwards, there had been no serious attempt to enfranchise women by the Constituent Assembly, and women had no political rights in the new system. In the very month in which the new Constitution went into effect, however, Olympe de Gouges demanded such rights in her historic Declaration of the Rights of Women, but the pamphlet made little impact at the time.[30] During the period of the Legislative Assembly, some of the mixed and women's clubs continued to meet, and women also occasionally presented addresses to the Assembly or joined with crowds of men in presenting petitions on various occasions. On October 19, 1791, for example, a market-woman presented an address in which she declared, "Grâce aux députés patriotes, la France commence à jouir de la liberté, mais ce grand ouvrage n'est pas terminé." She then said that the people of France had placed their fate in the hands of the deputies and it was "sur vous seul il fond son espérance." Furthermore, she declared that "le choix sage et réfléchi que les

Francais ont fait en vous, pour la seconde législature nous donne lieu d'espoir que la Constitution de ce royaume sera le plus bel ouvrage des mortels."[31]

On April 1, 1792, Etta Palm presented to the Assembly a petition in which she asked the deputies to take under consideration "l'état d'avilissement" to which women were reduced with regard to their political rights and to reclaim for them "la pleine jouissance des droits naturels dont elles ont été privées par une longue oppression." Men, she said, were finally free, but "les femmes sont esclaves de mille prejuges." Therefore, she was asking that the Assembly give to girls the right to "une education morale" and that they be declared adults at age twenty-one. As well, Palm requested that "la liberte politique" and l'égalité des droits" be granted to both sexes and that a divorce law be passed. The presiding deputy responded vaguely that "l'Assemblee évitera, dans les lois qu'elle est chargé de faire, tout ce qui pourrait exciter leurs regrets et leurs larmes."[32]

Indeed, the Assembly later in the year did grant women legal majority at the age of 21, including the right to appear as witnesses in civil lawsuits, and produced a law making divorce possible by mutual consent or marital incompatibility.[33]

In addition, the period of the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies also witnessed the appearance of a number of newspapers published by women's groups and edited by women or addressed to a female audience, particularly in Paris.[34] *Les Etrennes nationales des dames*, published by a group of women, appeared as early as 30 November 1789. Referring to the contributions of the women during the October Days, *Les Etrennes* declared, "Nous souffrons plus que les hommes qui, avec leurs déclarations des droits, nous laissent en état d'infériorité," and suggested that there should be female representatives at the National Assembly.[35] Another such periodical, *La Feuille du soir*, began to appear probably in January, 1790. Other journals known to have been published by women but about which little is known were *Les Evénements du Jour*, *Le Veritable Ami de la Reine ou Journal des Dames*, and *Les Annales de l'Education du Sexe*.[36] There were also journals appealing to women that in fact were written by men, such as *La Gazette des Halles* and *L'Observateur feminin*, the latter of which mocked Theroigne de Mericourt.[37] Later there appeared several periodicals addressed to women bearing a title reminiscent of very popular periodicals produced for working-class men of Paris, *Mère Duchesne*.[38]

The major event of early 1792 was the declaration of war against Austria, following months of debate both within the Legislative Assembly and the clubs, in particular the Paris Jacobin club which heard heated exchanges between Brissot and Robespierre. Some women, as we have seen, advocated that legions of amazons be formed, but little came of these suggestions. It was in 1792 also that Madame Roland began her remarkable political career after her husband became Minister of the Interior in the first "Patriot," Brissotin or Girondin ministry created in March.[39] The summer of 1792 also witnessed two more insurrections, those of June 20 and August 10, in both of which women played at least a supporting role. The invasion of the Tuileries Palace on June 20 was led by sans-culottes of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine; although not even George Rude was able to find much precise information about the insurgents, he does note that they included some women.[40] In the much more significant insurrection of August 10, which overthrew the monarchy, three women not only played active roles, but were formally decorated for their efforts with civic crowns from the Commune of Paris. The three were Reine Audu, who had also participated in the October Days, Theroigne de Mericourt, and Claire Lacombe, who was later to become president of the most active and most famous of the women's clubs, the Citoyennes Republicaines Revolutionnaires. Although she was not so decorated, a fourth woman, Pauline Léon, also was among the insurgents of August 10.

The fall of the monarchy also brought an end to the Legislative Assembly and to the entire constitutional edifice of 1791, and opened the period of the National Convention and the Republic, the most radical phase of the Revolution and the one in which women's organized political participation was to reach its zenith.

B. The Second Sex in the Second City.

Of the few women's clubs on which there is any detailed information one was in France's second city, Lyon, which had a particularly active women's organization established quite early in the revolution and for which some interesting accounts are available. It evolved from the fraternal Société du Concert which was established in February, 1791 and which held its meetings, open to the public, at the Pères de l'Oratoire. It had a membership of approximately two thousand people. Women were admitted and as a sign of patriotism they had to wear a tricolour ribbon.[41] It seems that many women attended the meetings and it was not long before they attempted to organize their own club. In June, 1791 women went as a group to participate in prayers for two prisoners executed for debt and formed a procession to the cathedral to hear the mass and Te Deum.[42] In August the women appointed a provisional president, femme Sobry, who must have suffered a loss of self-confidence almost immediately in that she called on her husband to take that position and she became vice-president. Nonetheless this was still considered to be a women's club, despite the fact the M. Sobry now presided. The charter demanded that members wear a medallion at public ceremonies and that they take the following oath: "Je jure d'etre fidèle à la nation, a la loi et au roi, je jure de porter en toute occasion mon mari, mes frères, et mes enfants a remplir leur devoirs envers la patrie, je jure d'apprendre a mes enfants et à tous autres sur que j'aurais autorité à préférer la mort à l'esclavage."[43] The meetings were held every Sunday at the hour of Vespers in a house on the Rue du Pas-Etroit at the corner of the Rue Commarmont. On Sundays and holidays the society marched in a procession displaying the flag of Saint-Jean.[44]

The Revolutions de Paris took unfavorable notice of the new women's club at Lyon. "Au nom de la patrie, au nom de la nature, au nom des bonnes moeurs dont les clubs de femmes sont les fléaux, a cause de la dissipation qu'ils entraînent avec eux, à rester chez elles et à veiller à leur ménage."[45] In Lyon as well the club was a victim of unkind criticism. In a Declaration burlesque des droits de la femme published there shortly after the first meeting, Article I proclaimed, "les femmes naissent, vivent et meurent avec le droit de parler. Elles sont égales en prétention à cet egard. Les distinctions entre elles ne peuvent etre fondées que sur la plus ou moins grande perfection des organes de la parole." Article XVII was equally sarcastic. "L'art de déraisonner étant chez la femme un droit inhérent et imprescriptible, nulle femme ne peut en être privée jusqu'a ce qu'il plaise à la nature d'en faire d'autres différement constituees."[46]

In January, 1792, the group, now called the Citoyennes de Lyon Composant l'Association Seante aux Jacobins de Lyon, presented their charter to the Societe des Jacobins in Paris and requested affiliation with them. Despite the fact that the women were sincere and dedicated in their club activities it appears that they were never really taken seriously. Their invitations and addresses to the municipal and governmental committees were largely ignored.[47]

The Journal de Lyon of January 9, 1793 gave the minutes of the club meeting held on December 30, 1792. The editor of the journal introduced the topic with words of support and encouragement. He said that while many popular societies had abandoned all useful activities, the women's club of Lyon had prepared itself by means of instructive gatherings for the responsibilities that the nation was now imposing upon them. This society of mothers "qui étudient les formes de notre nouveau gouvernement, inspirent à leurs enfants l'amour de la patrie, le respect de loix, la conservation de leurs droits et l'observation fidèle de devoirs" had certainly earned, in the opinion of the editor, at least, "<un> droit sans doute à nos hommages."[48] He continued on to encourage the women to keep up their "intéressants travaux," saying that "c'est a vous qu'est confié le soin de préparer la génération future au régime difficile de la liberté." Noting that all of his generation had been raised to the servile habits of the monarchy, he added, "nous avons peine à supporter le jour si pur de la liberté," whereas now the population was ready to fight for it. He stated that it was the children "qui recueilleront le prix de nos travaux." They would learn from the mistakes of their elders. "Mères de famille, donnez nous des hommes, formez des citoyens, et vous aurez mérité de la patrie."[49]

Proceeding then to the minutes, the journal reported that the meeting began as usual with the minutes of the previous assembly. Next, a member asked for the singing of the Marseillaise and two young members obliged, "accompagnés de la musique et de la societé en choeur." At the same time "l'arrivée des trois Corps administratifs," representing department, district, and city respectively, occurred and these individuals took their places beside the president. This group was composed of "magistrats du peuple" and they were immediately questioned by the President Charton and Citoyenne Charpine. The president addressed to them "un discours oū elle a peint à quel point leurs places les obligent de s'occuper du bonheur de leurs compatriotes, qui sera la gloire et leur félicité." Citoyenne Charpine emphasized the necessity of formulating a new catechism so that children would come to understand the grandeur of the Supreme Being and "les principes du vrai républicain." Next the Citoyenne Pere mounted the tribune and in her address explained that "nous devions notre glorieuse révolution aux philosophes qui nous ont devancé" and emphasized the importance of propagating the popúlar societies so that the young people could be properly instructed in the new laws. Then the Citoyenne Machezot delivered to the magistrates a speech in which she drew their attention "sur cette grande cité" and "elle leur promet au nom de l'Assemblée à la fin de leurs fonctions la récompense des vrais républicains, la gloire d'avoir bien mérité de la patrie."[50]

All the addresses were strongly patriotic in theme as was the address of one of the younger members. "La jeune citoyenne Robin est montée à la tribune, et a récité le chapitre sept du Contrat Social de J.J. Rousseau, une partie du chapitre 8 du même livre, les droits de l'homme, et une prière patriotique."[51] More of the same followed from other young members who read more of the Social Contract and part of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and gave more patriotic prayers. Prizes were awarded to the participants and it is interesting to note that some of these were boys. The first prizes were presented by the representatives of the department, the second by the representatives of the district, and the third by those of the municipality. One of the young boys took an oath not to use the sabre with which he had been decorated for any purpose other than "pour renverser les ennemis de la patrie et de la République."[52]

The meeting continued with speeches from the government representatives. Citizen Maillard, representing the department, reviewed the responsibilities that each citizen must take in order to consolidate the new republic. He emphasized the responsibilities that these "citoyennes mères de famille" had to their children. Citizen Marezon, who was representing the district, took as his theme the importance of the mothers' role in instructing their children, and the municipal representative, Citizen Bertholon, spoke of the importance of spreading the society's principles of patriotism and of the responsibilities of mothers in bringing happiness to their fellow citizens.[53] Obviously, women must remember, even while enthusiastically participating in the birth of the new nation and its institutions, that somebody still had to attend to domestic duties. Who better to remind them than the male representatives of the new governing bodies?

The editor of the Journal de Lyon added the following note: "Nous avons pu résister au plaisir de donner ce procès-verbal en entier. Principes purs, patriotisme sage, simplicité vraiment républicaine, voilà l'exemple que donnent les citoyennes de Lyon a tous les amis de l'égalité." There is a further note of interest with regard to the women's situation. "Nous devons ajouter que, par un arrête de la société, homologue par le Conseil général de la commune, une cueillette de plus de 1,000 liv. destinee a un achat de piques, a été distribuée aux femmes dont les maris sont aux frontières."[54]

Extracts of the minutes of the next meeting appeared in the same journal on January 10, 1793. Once again the women mounted the tribune to make patriotic speeches. Citizeness Peyre pointed out that "les temps sont arrivés où les prestiges de l'erreur seront bientôt dissipés." Furthermore, "les voiles du mensonge sont déchirés, la vérité triomphe, elle brille de sa simplicité naturelle." The perfect society was at hand. Tyrants would fall and all classes would soon march together under the flag of liberty and equality. She stressed the responsibility of the society in matters of public education. It was necessary, she believed, "à donner à nos enfants un catéchisme ou ils apprennent a connaître la grandeur de l'Etre Suprême, sans oublier qu'ils sont citoyens; que le même catéchisme leur apprenne ce qu'ils doivent à Dieu et à leur patrie." Another speaker admonished citizenesses to do their part at home while the men were at the front defending them. "Vous êtes parvenues à maintenir la tranquillité dans cette ville." Furthermore, "si quelques nuages ont troublé l'atmosphère de votre patriotisme, vous avez bientôt reconnu qu'il était dangereux de vous laisser influencer par les malveillants."[55]

The Révolutions de Paris had other opinions. In its January 19-26 issue it once again dealt harshly with the club at Lyon. The article began with a description of an ideal political involvement for women, stating, "rien ne serait plus déifiant, plus utile même qu'un cercle de bonnes mères de famille du même quartier, se réunissant chaque jour à une certaine heure, leurs enfans sur les genoux, et l'ouvrage a la main." That they consult each other "sur les devoirs de leur état," that the father comes each evening to share with them the events of the day and, of course, play the role of superior intellect and political educator by reading to them the daily decrees of the National Assembly, is to be expected. "Il n'y aurait rien à dire à cela, c'est tout naturel." But "que penser de ce club de femmes qui vient de s'ouvrir à Lyon?" That was quite a different matter. Although the editors would assuredly be "les premiers à rendre hommage à la pureté des intentions de ces bonnes citoyennes," they questioned why the women held to such a strict agenda for their meetings and why did they take minutes? Why invite the three administrative bodies to observe the meetings? And why did President Chareton (sic) and the Citoyenne Charpine address the magistrates in order to ask for a new catechism which is "plus à l'ordre du jour?" What was the matter with old one? Why, queried the editor, would a mother need such a thing as a book from which to instruct her children? "N'a-t-elle pas le livre de la nature et son coeur? et le père, n'est-il pas le premier instituteur?" What could the young girls learn from Rousseau's Contrat social that they have not already learned in Lafontaine's fairy tales?[56]

The good women of Lyon should stay home,"au nom de la patrie," "au nom de la nature," and "au nom des bonnes moeurs domestiques." Because of the dissipation that these clubs cause among women, said the editors, "nous conjurons les bonnes citoyennes de Lyon de rester chez elles, de veiller à leur ménage, sans s'inquiéter de la réforme du catéchisme de l'évêque Lamourette, et sans avoir la prétention d'entendre le contrat social à livre ouvert."[57]

Others shared that opinion. The president of the Club Central de Lyon expressed in an address to members his open distrust, verging on hatred, of women in general. It was reported in the Journal de la Société Populaire des amis de la constitution établie à Lyon that President Grandchamp proclaimed that among the many types of enemies "le plus redoubtables sont ceux qui saisissent l'homme dès le berceau et peuvent le conduire par les chemins de l'erreur, jusqu'à la decrépitude." He explained in more detail that these enemies "habitent nos demeures, ils nous touchent, ils nous sont chers, nous sommes leurs esclaves." Who were they? "La plus belle moitié du genre humain, la plus belle, et non la plus heureuse, ce sexe frivole qui fait le bonheur et le tourment de l'autre." This was the enemy "qui s'est vengé de sa faiblesse naturelle en captivant par artifice la force même; qui cache sous des fleurs les chaines de bronze dont il charge nos climats, et asservit les hommes les plus sages." Women, in a word, "ont un empire absolu sur l'opinion." He believed that women should not be shocked by his straightforward expression of the "la vérité" and therefore he felt that he could say "que par une suite de l'intuition vicieuse des gouvernements, par une suite de leur education, les femmes refermées toute leur vie dans le cercle d'un petit nombre de connaissances frivoles, sont les premières victimes de l'ignorance; faiblesse, sensibilité, delicatesse, telle est leur nature." Furthermore, he added, "telles sont aussi les routes par lesquelles le fanatisme, les préjugés, l'entêtement, qui en est la suite, parviennent a leur âme facile, s'en saisissent et leur font exécuter le long de la vie leurs funestes décrets" and these weaknesses have had a direct bearing on the Revolution. "Telles sont les principales sources d'où plus d'une fois dans la revolution ont découlés les malheurs qui l'ont défigurée."[58] It is obvious from the words of the worthy President Grandchamp that not all Lyonnais were in favor of the women's club. Vehement opposition to female politicization did exist.

The women of Lyon truly came into their own during the difficult days of the autumn of 1792 when fear of an invasion by foreign armies resulted in panic and widespread disorder from which their city was not immune. The women, fearing widespread hoarding and starvation, took action in an organized manner and for three days in mid-September they rioted in the streets. From September sixteenth to eighteenth they became "commissaires de police femelles" and they took over the markets and boutiques. They posted a notice to residents of the city[59] which announced that the sovereign people of Lyon, having lived for years under the tyranny of the "aristocrates monopoleurs," had suffered enough. The people, "fatigué depuis quatre ans des pertes surtout qu'éprouve le papier-monnaie" that they have received in return for their work and for their sweat, and paying ever-increasing prices for the basic necessities of life, had now decreed "qu'il ne paierait les marchandises servant a ses besoins journaliers qu'aux prix suivants" and the poster went on to list sixty items which would be subject to price control. The poster explained that abiding by this decree would demonstrate a patriotism which worked truly for the good of the people. It would result in a "juste proportion entre ce qu'il gagne et dépense journellement."[60] Those citizens who conformed to "la volonté de ce peuple," that is, those who adhered to the decree, "qui n'est fondée que sur les bases de la justice, de l'équité et de l'égalité," would be respected by their fellow citizens and would find in them "des gardiens de leur fidèle de leur propriétés." On the other hand, those who did not listen or who dared to oppose the will of the people in some manner would be publicly disgraced and generally regarded as traitors to the patrie and they would be ordered to conform to the decree and to sell their merchandise for the same price that they had paid for it.[61]

Unfortunately, the existing sources provide very little information for the dramatic developments during 1793 in Lyon and the role of the women at that time. After Lyonnais sympathizers of the Girondins took over the city in late May, Montagnard forces laid siege until it fell on October 9; there followed the mass executions of many of the "federalist" sympathizers. Not even the most recent analysis of this period provides any information on the activities or fate of the women's clubs in these events,[62] but fragments of interesting information on the Lyonnaises are presented in Robert Palmer's classic Twelve Who Ruled. When the Revolutionary Army entered in Lyon in late November, its commander Ronsin noted that most men remained in hiding, and only "a few women stood along our way. In their faces could be read more indignation than fear." A few days later, a petition purportedly signed by 10,000 women of Lyon appealed to Collot d'Herbois and Fouché, the representatives on mission there, for mercy for the thousands of men thrown into jail. The appeal was sternly rejected, and Collot on his return to Paris severely criticized the people of Lyon, in particular the women, who, he told the Jacobin Club, were "plunged madly into adultery and prostitution."[63]

Chapter IV

The Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires

A. Origins.

The formation of the Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires took place over several months in the spring of 1793. The threat of foreign war which occurred after the Declaration of Pillnitz in August, 1791 brought all club activity to a more intensely political orientation than it had previously enjoyed. During the winter and spring of 1792 the women in the clubs redirected their activities, turning from fetes, education and philanthropy to matters of political interest. By February of 1793 the women of Paris openly expressed the desire for an organization independent of male dominance.

In February a group of women who were later to form the membership of the Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires approached the Jacobin society with a request for a place to meet.[1] They were not enthusiastically received and the president announced that "une députation de citoyennes de la section des Quatre-Nations demande la disposition de la salle des Jacobins pour le lendemain, à quatre heures." The purpose would be a discussion on hoarding. One of the Jacobin members, Francois Desfieux, responded that the room was occupied every afternoon by members of the Société des Défenseurs de la République Une et Indivisible des 83 Départements. The women would only be able to occupy the room in the morning. They could, however, use the salle de la Societe fraternelle, which contained eight hundred seats, in the afternoon. At this time Robespierre objected that "les discussions trop répétées sur les denrées alarment la République" and the members tried to go on to the daily business. However the crowd in the tribunes refused to be silenced and there were shouts that "il y a dans le sein même de la Société des marchands, des accapareurs, qui s'enrichissent des malheurs publics." Calm could not be restored and the president tried to explain that their group did not have jurisdiction over the disposal of the meeting room during the day.

Member Dubois-Crancé then spoke, claiming "qu'il faut d'abord conquérir la liberté, qu'après on aura les denrées à bon marché." He said that as president of the Convention "il repoussera avec horreur la pétition qui a pour objet la taxe des denrées." In response the tumult began again. A member stated that if women were permitted "de se réunir dans cette salle, trente mille femmes pourraient exciter du désordre dans Paris." Another member, Jeanbon Saint-André, responded that "le remède sera de chasser des Sociétés populaires ceux qui suscitent des discussions à ce sujet pour troubler l'ordre." He continued, "Ce n'est pas le moment d'agiter, la question des subsistances n'est point à l'ordre du jour, elle compromettrait le calme et la tranquillité dont nous avons besoin. La Société doit s'occuper imperturbablement de l'examen de la Constitution, et nulle autre matière ne doit être mise à l'ordre du jour, avant que celle-là soit épuisée."[2] This emotional exchange, particularly as reported in the remarks of Dubois-Crancé and the unnamed speaker that preceded him, leaves little doubt that the Jacobins feared the increasing participation of women in matters of politics and that they were determined to put down any possibility of a female insurrection.

This question of subsistances brought before the Jacobins at this time had occupied women in their roles as wives and mothers for a very long time. How were they to obtain enough food to sustain their families in times of severe shortages? The intermingling of the economic considerations and political objectives provides a constant in the theme of women's motivations throughout the Revolution. The winter months of 1793 were no exception. The women had been meeting, along with their husbands, in the club originally founded by Claude Dansard, in a room in the cellar of the Jacobin convent. They had struggled there to understand the broader problems of the Revolution, and to deal with their own familial problems, the most urgent of which concerned food supply and hunger. It has been said that it was here, in the evenings in this cellar, that the women could be seen in full political action.[3] Months before the women put forward the request for their own club, Marat, in L'Ami du peuple, praised the women for their subterranean assemblies which "la providence semble avoir place sous celui des Jacobins pour réparer ses torts."[4]

On the twenty-fourth of February several groups of women arrived at the Convention and requested admission to the bar. Led by the vice-president of the group which met in the Jacobin cellar, the Citoyenne Wafflard, the group explained that as mothers and wives of the "défenseurs de la patrie" and due to their concern with the scarcity of the basic necessities of life, they had come to express to the Assembly the anger which overwhelmed them.[5] On the same day a group of laundresses also complained before the Convention that the head of a tyrant had fallen under the blade of the law, but now the blade was weighing on the heads of the public bloodsuckers who claimed to be friends of the people but "qui ne le caressent que pour mieux l'étouffer."[6]

In May, 1793 the women appeared before the Commune with their official request to form a women's club. The *Moniteur* reported as follows: "Plusieurs citoyennes se sont présentées au secrétariat de la municipalite, et pour se conformer à la loi sur la police municipale, ont declaré être dans l'intention de s'assembler de former une société où les femmes, seules, pourront être admises. Cette société a pour but de déliberer sur les moyens de déjouer les projets des ennemis de la république. Elle portera le nom de Société républicaine révolutionnaire et se réunira à la Bibliothèque des jacobins rue St-Honoré."[7]

The club's charter provided for a new president to be elected every month, and although Claire Lacombe was not the first one elected, she and Pauline Léon were the two who were most active and, consequently, best known of all the presidents. Although Claire Lacombe has mainly kept her place in history due to her association with the Citoyennes Républicaines, she had been politically aware and active before that affiliation occurred. She was not resident in Paris until April of 1792, having arrived there from Toulon near the beginning of the month. On July 25 of that year she petitioned the Assembly for the right to serve in the army. She declared her patriotism eloquently and offered her person to her country. "Ne pouvant venir au secours de ma patrie, que vous avez déclarée en danger, par des sacrifices pécuniaires, je viens lui faire hommage de ma personne." In declaring her hatred of despots, she exhorted mothers of families to make their contribution equal to her own by inculcating in their children "l'amour de la liberté et l'horreur de despotes." She made at least one concrete suggestion for alleviating France's present military condition; La Fayette, that "perfide Catalina," should not be allowed to lead the French armies. Such an arrangement could be "excusable seulement aux yeux de ceux dont il a voulu servir les infames projets." Why had he not been disciplined? Was the Assembly waiting for the enemies of the patrie to arrive "dans le Sénat pour le détruire par la hache et le feu?" She warned that the enemies of the nation would soon be in their midst and encouraged the members of the Assembly to act. She said, "élevez-vous à la hauteur qui vous appartient; nommez des chefs à qui nous puissions donner notre confiance, dites un mot, un seul mot, et les ennemis disparaîtront."[8]

Although her petition was received with applause, probably due not so much to her patriotism as to her beauty, her request for employment was not granted. The Moniteur made little of this eloquent address. On the twenty-eighth of July it reported that "une jeune citoyenne vient d'offrir de combattre de sa personne les ennemis de la patrie."[9]

Claire Lacombe participated in the insurrection at the Tuileries on August 10, 1792, and received a civic crown for her efforts. On the twenty-fifth she thanked the Legislative Assembly for "la couronne civique qui lui a été offerte par les fédérés, avec une ceinture tricolore et un certificat pour témoigner de son courage dans la journée du 10 août," accompanied by "mention honorable de l'Assemblée."[10] The certificate which accompanied the award stated that "elle a combattu les satellites d'une cour perfide, mais que par son courage et sa bravoure autrefois peu commune aux autres personnes de son sexe, elle a rallié les citoyens qu'un feu continuel mettait en déroute."[11]

At the beginning of April, 1793, after the defection of French General Dumouriez to the Austrians, Claire Lacombe proposed to the Jacobins that the aristocrats of Paris and their families should be seized as hostages.[12] It is obvious that she believed in direct and immediate action on matters of such importance. At about this same time the Club des Citoyennes Républicaines was beginning to take shape. Exactly how Lacombe became president is uncertain. It is known that the femme Lecointre led groups which petitioned the Jacobins and the Assembly during the spring. It was not until June 26 that Claire Lacombe appeared at the head of a delegation. The club's petition of August 26 to the Convention was signed by Citoyenne Champion, president. It is certain that Claire Lacombe did not succeed to the presidency before September and in the short period remaining before the prohibition of the clubs on October 30 she made a name for herself as a gifted speaker and a person possessing intellect and reason.

Immediately after Lacombe's term in office came the presidency of Pauline Léon, who was also a person of talent and intelligence. Like her predecessor she had a history of political involvement which preceded the Citoyennes Rèpublicaines. She had been active on July 14, 1789, helping to barricade the streets and in offering encouragement and assistance wherever she could.[13] She was known for her hatred of La Fayette whom she regarded as a traitor after the October Days. Léon was at the Champ de Mars on July 17, 1791 in order to sign the petition demanding the dethronement of King Louis XVI, and witnessed the massacre which took place there. Later she was beaten up, mistreated by neighbours, and even threatened with prison for her political beliefs and activities.

March 6, 1792 saw Léon at the Assembly at the head of a group of women who were petitioning "pour réclamer le droit qu'a tout individu de pourvoir à la defense de sa vie et de sa liberté." She asked what was to become of the women if their fathers, brothers, and husbands died at the hands of the enemy. "Pourrait-on nous interdire la douceur de les venger ou de périr a leurs côtés?" She reminded the Assembly that women were citizens, and "le sort de la patrie ne saurait nous être indifférent." She said that the deputies should remember that their predecessors had put the sacred trust of the Consitution into the hands of the women "aussi bien que dans les vôtres" and "comment conserver ce dépot si nous n'avons des armes pour le défendre des attaques de ses ennemis?" She explained that the women felt that they needed to have weapons and they had come to request permission to get them. "Vous ne pouvez nous refuser, et la société ne peut nous ôter ce droit que la nature nous donne, à moins que l'on prétende que la Déclaration des droits n'a pas d'application pour les femmes, et qu'elles doivent se laisser égorger comme des agneaux sans avoir le droit de se défendre, car croit-on que les tyrans nous épargneraient?" If victory should go to the enemy, should the women be condemned to await in their homes "une mort honteuse" and "toutes les horreurs qui la precederaient" or perhaps an even worse misfortune: "celui de survivre a ce qui nous avons de plus cher, à notre famille et à notre liberté?" She emphasized in her presentation that the women wanted to obtain weapons, wished permission to practise military manoeuvres on Sundays and holidays, and asked to have as their commander a member of the National Guard, "toujours en nous cnnformant aux règlements que la sagesse de M. le maire nous prescrirait pour le bon ordre et la tranquillité publique."[14]

This could not be interpreted as merely a simple request to the Assembly for the means to participate militarily. This was a declaration of equality. The request was for arms in the short run because war was imminent and defeat a very real possibility, but at the heart of this address was the desire to play an active role in public affairs. The fact that Pauline Léon read the petition foretold the political role she would soon play as member and president of the Citoyennes Républicaines. Later in 1792, Léon did in fact take up arms, not against an external foe, but against King Louis XVI, for she was among the insurgents of August 10, 1792. She offered her pike, however, to an unarmed sans-culotte whom she admonished to use it well. Léon later signed an address demanding the death of the king and her name graced many patriotic petitions.[15]

The club never had a large membership. It is thought to have had about one hundred seventy members maximum,[16] with about one hundred who regularly attended the meetings. Of the nine members for whom the ages are known, six were relatively young, between the ages of twenty-five and thirty years. The other third were between the ages of sixty and seventy, and although there are no surviving minutes of the meetings, some detailed information on how the club functioned does exist. The Reglement stated in Article 13 that any woman wishing to become a member of the Society must be presented by one woman and supported by two. Their names would be announced in the next meeting and posted. "Elles seront admises s'il ne s'élève aucune reclamation; s'il s'en eleve, leur admission sera ajournée." Any objections would be heard by the committee of correspondence which would make its report to the Society. The Society would then judge "dans sa sagesse" the denunciations. As well, every new citizen would be required by the President, in the name of the Society, to take the oath as follows: "Je jure de vivre pour la République ou de mourir pour elle; je promets d'être fidèle au règlement de la Société, tant qu'il subsistera." Article 26 stated that since the society granted the right to speak to all its members, and since "jeune citoyennes pourraient, avec les meilleures intentions, compromettre la Société par des motions peu réfléchies," a minimum age for admission would be established as eighteen years. Mothers could bring their children with them up to age eighteen but they would not have a voice in debates. The club would have three committees, each one composed of a dozen members. As well as the committee of correspondence, there would be a committee of administration and a committee of welfare. Exhibition of "des bonne moeurs" was "la condition la plus essentielle" for admission. As well, the president was to wear the "bonnet rouge."[17]

The actual objectives of the club are best revealed not just in its oath, in promising to live or die for the patrie, but also in its submission to the Jacobins of May 12, 1793. At this time the women requested that they be armed in order to fight the "ennemis du dedans." They stated, "Nous avons résolu de garder l'intérieur, tandis que nos frères garderont les frontières."[18] The women saw the defense of the patrie in two parts and divided revolutionary responsibilities accordingly. The men were responsible for defense on the exterior, that is, for winning the foreign wars. The women, on the other hand, would look to safeguarding the Revolution in the interior, ever on the alert against counter-revolutionary threats. This is the premise from which the Citoyennes Republicaines began their activities. Their attempts to carry out this responsibility as they conceived it became increasingly violent as the Revolution progressed. Their presence at the Jacobin club on May 12 announced their intentions. "Une délegation de la Société des républicaines révolutionnaires, séante à la Bibliothèque des Jacobins, est introduite. L'orateur de la deputation dit que la Société se propose d'armer les femmes patriotes de dix-huit à cinquante ans et de les organiser en corps d'armée contre la Vendée. Le President félicite la délegation."[19]

The presentation was much more involved and patriotic in tone than Aulard reported. The women demanded "l'extermination des scélérats, l'arrestation de tous les suspects et la formation de compagnies d'amazones." They announced that they had resolved "de garder l'intérieur" because the men would be at the frontiers and they had sworn to "périr plutôt sous les débris fumants de cette ville que de capituler avec les vainqueurs."[20] In the same presentation they called for a harsh tax on wealth in order to assure subsistance levels for the wives of soldiers and they invited all the women to sign their petition because they loved only those "dont le coeur brille du feu du patriotisme." The petition proclaimed, "nous sauverons la patrie, citoyens, ne croyez pas nous décourager."[21] On May 19 the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines teamed up with members of the Club des Cordeliers and appeared once again at the Jacobin club. The spokesperson announced a petition composed by members of both societies and then proceeded to read it to the assembly. It opened with a warning that "la patrie est dans le danger le plus imminent" and "si vous voulez la sauver, il faut employer les mesures les plus vigoureuses." In the uproar which resulted the orator was forced to insist upon "la plus grande attention" of the audience. He, or possibly she, succeeded in regaining control and continued on to warn that there were conspirators waiting in the wings "pour immoler les patriotes et tout ce qu'ils ont de plus cher" as soon as the volunteers had departed to put down the uprising in the Vendee. In order to prevent these horrible events, it should be decreed immediately that suspects would be arrested and that there would be established "des tribunaux révolutionnaires dans tous les départements et dans les sections de Paris." Next came the accusations against certain of the Girondins that have served to lead some historians to conclude that the sole purpose of the Citoyennes Républicaines was to overthrow that group in the Convention.[22] The spokesperson proclaimed that "depuis longtemps, les Brissot, les Guadet, les

Vergniaud, les Gensonne, les Buzot, les Barbaroux, etc., sont désignes pour être les état-majors de l'armée contre-révolutionnaire. Que tardez-vous de les décréter d'accusation? Les criminels ne sont sacrés nulle part."[23] Furthermore, the speaker asked for the establishment "dans chaque ville des armées revolutionnaires composees de sans-culottes, en proportion de leur population" and "que l'armée de Paris soit portée à quarante mille hommes" to be paid for by the rich and "que sur toutes les places publiques s'élèvent des ateliers où le fer se convertisse en armes de toutes espèces." There existed, the speaker complained, "un complot affreux de faire mourir de faim le peuple" by keeping essential food items at an enormous price. "Legislateurs, frappez les agioteurs, les accapareurs et egoistes marchands." All "agioteurs" and "accapareurs" as well as "égoïstes marchands" should be exterminated and "la patrie sera assez opulente, s'il lui reste les sans-culottes et leurs vertus." The orator then implored the audience to come to the rescue of all the unfortunates. "C'est le cri de la nature, c'est le voeu des vrais patriotes! Notre coeur est déchire par le spectacle de la misère publique ." Our intention, he or she said, "est de rélever l'homme" and to have "pas un malheureux dans la République." This address, said the speaker, must be taken to the Convention where it would be determined if enemies there would dare to oppose measures proposed for the good of the Republic.[24]

To all this the President of the Jacobins, at this time Bentabole, replied that "la Société entend avec la plus vive satisfaction les accents du patriotisme le plus pur, le plus ardent." Furthermore, the president stated, the society "secondera vos efforts de tout son courage, car elle a les mêmes principes et elle a manifesté les mêmes opinions."[25] The next day the joint deputation arrived at the Council of the Paris Commune and the President congratulated the women on their "mâle energie" and invited them to the meeting.[26]

One week later, on May 27, the women sent a new deputation to the Jacobins. This time there were no men included. The spokesperson was the Citoyenne Lecointre. Aulard reports with brevity that "la citoyenne Lecointre, parlant au nom d'une délégation de la Société des républicaines révolutionnaires, affirme que ses compagnes ne sont pas 'des femmes serviles, des animaux domestiques'. Elles se formeront en phalange pour anéantir les aristocrates. Le président les félicite, puis il déclare que la séance est levée; il est neuf heures et demie."[27]

B. The Citoyennes Républicaines against the Girondins.

From shortly after its formal organization on May 10, the Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires began to involve itself in the great political issue then dividing the National Convention and the city of Paris, the struggle for dominance between the rival factions of the Mountain and the Girondins. Some of the city's 48 sections were circulating petitions demanding the removal of twenty-two Girondin deputies, and on May 13, a police spy reported that the women of the Citoyennes Republicaines "persévèrent dans le projet de demander la retraite des 22 deputes. . . . Elles ont même l'espoir qu'elles seront secondées par les hommes."[28] At the same time, the Citoyennes Républicaines became involved in a political struggle over seating arrangements in the public galleries of the National Convention. The women were opposing decrees of the Convention, presumably adopted through Girondin influence, that authorised the deputies to distribute four hundred tickets to their friends. The women demanded to be admitted to the galleries along with the friends of the deputies who carried passes. The Assembly heard their complaints, then passed immediately "à l'ordre du jour." In its next meeting the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines determined to put a stop to such discrimination. From nine a.m. they stood guard at the door of the Convention and stopped anyone with passes from entering. Police reported that crowds of women were harassing citizens trying to enter the public galleries; they tore up tickets of men they called "Girondins, Brissotins."[29] The result was "une espèce d'émeute occasionné par des femmes . . . au sujet des cartes d'entrée à la Convention." One of the women was arrested, and when National Guardsmen took her away, she was followed by a crowd of women, "une affluence prodigieuse afin d'embrasser sa défense."[30] It was in this kind of situation that Théroigne de Méricourt on May 15 was assaulted by a group of spectators and publicly humiliated, after which her brief political career came to an end.[31]

At about the same time women began to interrupt proceedings inside the Convention. They caused disturbances in the corridors and the noise upset the the deputies in the salle de séances. On May 18, Isnard, the Girondin president of the Convention, rose and issued a warning to the deputies, prefacing his remarks with the declaration that "si vous pouviez ouvrir mon coeur, vous y verriez mon amour pour ma patrie; et, dusse-je être immolé sur ce fauteuil, mon dernier soupir ne serait que pour elle, et mes dernières paroles: Dieu, pardonne à mes assassins, ils sont égarés; mais sauve la liberté de mon pays." Having thus proclaimed his love of country, he went on to say that "<nos ennemis> veulent, à force de troubles et de désordres, mettre un parti contre l'autre, et l'on veut à la suite faire insurger le peuple." He predicted that "la insurrection doit commencer par les femmes;

on veut dissoudre la Convention, et les Anglais profiteront de ce moment pour faire une descente à laquelle ils sont préparés, et alors la contre-révolution s'opère."[32] On the same day Gamon, another Girondin who was a member of the committee des inspecteurs de la salle, rose in the Convention to complain about the women's activities. He said that the inspectors had received complaints every day since the Convention began meeting in this new room from several deputies and citizens of various departments. They complained that "des femmes s'arrogeaient le droit de faire la police aux portes des tribunes de la Convention, et qu'elles déchiraient les billets de ceux qui se présentaient, en les insultant et les menaçant."[33] He reported that several of these women had been brought before the committee and they declared that they met at the Jacobins, "sous le titre de Dames de la Fraternité." One among them said that "la Convention avait établi un despotisme relativement à quelques places de tribunes qui se donnent par billets aux citoyens de nos départements, et qu'il fallait s'y opposer." The woman also explained that the society had decreed that they would stop the use of such passes to obtain seats in the tribunes. The women had stated that "depuis le commencement de la semaine elles avaient concouru regulièrement à l'exécution de cet arrêté." Gamon went on to explain that he had pointed out the errors in their reasoning and conduct, but to no avail. He told them that they were guilty of opposing the implementation of a law and that "leur conduite ne pouvait être que l'effet de l'erreur ou de suggestions perfides." He said that he explained that it was unjust to deprive the citizens of the departments of the opportunity to observe the meetings and enjoined the group to conform to the law and to respect public opinion.[34]

Deputy Gamon also had some comments about the situation of the women. He said that he had observed that "ces femmes, qui sont venues regulièrement troubler nos séances, et faire cette police singulière, sont evidemment salariées par nos ennemis." In reality, he said, "presque toutes portent les livrées de la misère; elles ne paraissent avoir d'autres moyens de subsistance connus que le produit de leur travail journalier." The women, he observed, passed their days in the corridors and distributed themselves in such a way "pour assiéger les portes de toutes les tribunes." He complained that these women were not without seats and that they could have observed the meetings peacefully, but that they preferred to "entretenir le désordre." They obstinately blocked the door of each tribune to those with passes and Gamon said he had to attribute their behaviour to aristocrats and anarchists. He closed his address with the hope that these "femmes égareés" would not continue to serve the enemies of liberty. In response the Montagnard deputy Ruhl said that "l'égalité existe partout." If the passes to the tribunes were suppressed, "les femmes n'auront plus de prétexte, et elles ne reviendront pas." Isnard then spoke again on the subject of the women's behaviour. He said that a citizen whom he had named to the Committee of General Security, "se trouvant avec ces femmes, leur a demandé pourquoi elles fermaient ces tribunes sans en profiter." Their response was that it was all the same to them because "avec nos billets nous avons des assignats, et souvent de l'argent." The implication was that they were being paid to do it.[35] The Girondin Buzot stated the same opinion in the Convention on the twentieth of May. He complained that the problem with the women had not been solved despite two decrees. "Il faut que les tribunes de la Convention appartiennent à tous les citoyens, et non à quelques femmes forcenées, avides de meurtre et de sang, qui vont puisser les principes les plus féroces dans des sociétés dépravées." He then proposed that the passes to the sittings of the Convention "soit distribué dans chaque section des billets qui seront délivrés par les présidents de section en assemblée générale."[36]

On the same day the session was interrupted with repeated shouts of "A bas, à bas!" when Barbaroux, Girondin deputy from Marseilles, was speaking. He descended from the tribune and was succeeded by Larivière, a Girondin deputy from Calvados, who demanded that the meeting be adjourned "pour constater le défaut de liberté."[37] The next speaker was Marat who asked, "que signifie cette terreur panique qu'à l'aspect de quelques mouvements d'improbation excités par des femmes? L'expérience aurait dû en guérir la Convention."[38]

The police observer, Dutard, on the 22 of May, referred to "les héroïnes de la liberté," meaning the members of the Citoyennes Républicaines, of whom he said that he had seen about a dozen on the terrace of the Tuileries the evening before engaged in a "colloque très vif" with a deputy of the Convention. This was taking place at the door of the Convention where the women were blocking anyone who had passes delivered by the deputies. Dutard described the women as probably "des femmes de jacobins de second ordre ou salariées par les Jacobins." He believed that the National Guard had only to resist them "avec prudence et raison" and they would not attempt "aucune enterprise."[39]

Although Dutard seems to have misinterpreted the will of the women, who were very serious in their determination to unseat the Girondins, he nonetheless noted another disturbance which took place on May 26 on the Quai Pelletier. This was a protest against the imprisonment of the Montagnard Hebert, editor of Le Père Duchesne. Dutard reported that "des cris, des chants, s'élevaient de tous côtés. Rangées en ordre de bataille, avec un drapeau à leur tête, des femmes se dirigeaient vers le Pont Neuf et invitaient les passants à venir avec elles à l'Abbaye pour délivrer le père Duchesne, arrêté par ordre de la Commission des Douze d'inspiration girondine." The women were in quite a violent frame of mind according to Dutard. "Ces excellentes patriotes avaient des piques à la main, des sabres ou de grands couteaux. Elles hurlaient: 'A bas les douze! Vive la Montagne! A la guillotine les brissotins! Vive Marat! Vive le père Duchesne!'" He reported as well a fracas on the terrace of the Tuileries where a deputy who had been intercepted asked the women who had given them permission to be there. The response was as follows: "L'égalité. Ne sommes-nous pas tous égaux? et si nous sommes tous égaux, j'ai le droit d'entrer aussi bien que ceux qui ont des cartes." When threatened with expulsion, the woman responded, "allez, Monsieur, ce n'est pas ici votre place, votre place est dans la salle, et malgré tous vos efforts, nous resterons ici et nous mettrons efforts a vos iniquités."[40]

The women did not confine their activities to the Convention. They were involved in confrontations in other places as well. In the section meetings the women, who in normal times were merely spectators, took sides in the pro-Montagnard versus pro-Girondin disputes and at times were wounded in the melees when chairs were thrown at their heads. One such encounter took place in the evening of May 22 in the section of Butte-des-Moulins where a crowd of one hundred to one hundred-fifty women and some men confronted moderates of the section where petitions from the Cordeliers Club and the Citoyennes Républicaines had twice been ignored. On May 29 the women of the section Mont Blanc were forbidden to observe the meetings of the general assembly. This was instigated by the section president, Fielval, who was considered to be a "aristocrate gangrené" by the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines. The pretext used for the exclusion was the size of the room, but the women knew that the real reason was their support of the sans-culottes. The women employed the same methods at the door of the section assembly as they did at the Convention. A dozen of them were posted at the door of the meeting room asking each person wishing admittance if he were an aristocrat. When the president was leaving the women attacked him, insulted him in a "manière la plus outrageante," threatened to rip off his épaulettes, and even to hang him.[41]

The police spy, Perrière, left little doubt that in his opinion the women were a force to be reckoned with; determined, serious, and bold in their intentions. On May 27 he wrote the following report: "On m'a dit qu'il avait eu hier des rassemblements un peu considérables aux Tuileries, aux Jacobins et au faubourg Saint-Antoine. Celui des Tuileries consistait surtout de femmes politiquement mises en avant par les mâles qui n'osent eux-mêmes proposer ou tenter le coup." The same policeman stated that the Girondins were the target of the women's wrath. He said of the women that "elles avaient soif, et c'était surtout dans les crânes de Buzot, de Brissot et de leurs partisans qu'elles voulaient boire."[42]

The *Patriote français*, also on May 27, 1793 described the women's activities. "Hier, ces dames se sont levées tout entières; elles ont promené une belle bannière et un beau bonnet-rouge; elles ont chanté les litanies de Marat, en attendant le requiem des brissotins. Elles voulaient produire une insurrection générale des hommes, mais aucun ne s'est levé et ces dames ont été se coucher. La partie est remise à aujourd'hui."[43]

Further evidence that the women were increasingly active in the days preceding the fall of the Girondins is found in Gorsas' *Le courrier des 83 départements* which said on May 28 that "des femmes se disant révolutionnaires, s'assemblent, prennent des arrêtés, courent les rues en poussant des cris furieux." Gorsas described the women as shrieking "comme les bacchantes prêtes à déchirer les membres d'Orphée" and said that they had, on the previous Sunday, "couru les divers quartiers de Paris, le fer d'une main et l'étandard de la révolte de l'autre."[44] He described the women as gathering for insurrection, saying that "une fermentation sourde régnait d'ailleurs à Paris." The women were arming themselves "de pistolets et de poignards" and were appearing in all parts of the city "portant devant elles l'étandard de la licence." They wished to purge the Convention and "faire tomber des têtes et s'enivrer de sang."[45]

The women were indeed active in the insurrection that they had helped prepare. They held their places and participated with energy and dedication in the days that followed. Determined and serious in their desire to unseat the Girondins, the citizenesses made their presence felt from May 31 to June 2 and beyond. In the last days of May they joined with the radical Jacobins, led by Hebert, now released from prison, and his partner, Varlet, to form a revolutionary committee of sections. This group met in the former bishop's palace, the Evêché, and lent support to the Committee of the insurrectionary Commune which was also directed by Hebert along with Pache, the mayor of Paris, and Chaumette. The two committees, with the women of the Citoyennes Republicaines in the very vanguard of the action, requested volunteers for the insurgent National Guard, attempted to oust all moderates from section committees, and called for a purge of all former clergy and nobility from the government bureaucracies. Not the least of the demands was for a general maximum or price ceiling on basic necessities of life (denrées). The Girondins knew that they were the first targets of the women's discontent.[46]

At three a.m. on the morning of May 31 the tocsin sounded from the headquarters at l'Evêché. About a hundred women are said to have been present at this location during the night.[47] The representatives of each section gathered at the Hotel de Ville in conference with the General Council of the Paris Commune. Delegates of the Citoyennes Républicaines sought to participate in the planning of the insurrection, but were permitted only as observers. The *Moniteur* of June 2 reported as follows: "Une députation des citoyennes de la Société Républicaine révolutionnaire se présente au conseil, et demande à etre admise à déliberer avec le comité révolutionnaire des hommes." The response was that "le conseil félicite ces citoyennes de leur zèle républicaine, et leur témoigne tous ses regrets de ne pouvoir les admettre au comité révolutionnaire des hommes. Il leur observe que ce comité n'est point une société réunie en club, mais qu'il est composé des députés des quarante-huit sections. Les citoyennes sont invitées à assister à la séance."[48] Even so close a student of the insurrection as Morris Slavin overlooks this report in the *Moniteur* and implies that this incident was revealed more than a year afterwards.[49]

The tribunes of the Convention were crowded with women on May 31 and they were vociferous and loud in their demands. They heckled the reporter for the Commission des Douze (which had been created by the Girondins to investigate sans-culotte activities in Paris) and expressed support for the deputation from the sections demanding the exclusion of the Girondins from the proceedings and the implementation of social and economic programs to help the sans-culottes. In the streets the women supported the insurgents. One instance is recorded of a woman of sixty-two years threatening to stab the national guards who were trying to rejoin their comrades. It is reported that she said the knife that she had drawn from her pocket "était pour les seroir (sic) ainsi qu'aux aristocrates parce qu'ils en étaient."[50] She was arrested and later released thanks to a deputation from the Citoyennes Républicaines led by one Constance Evrard, to whom the police granted custody of the woman.

The next day, June 1, was a quieter day but the women observed the meeting of the Commune and at one point suggested that the "braves volontaires sans-culottes" be provided with necessities so that they would be able to remain at their posts. The Council of the Commune agreed and ordered that the sections send "des voitures chargées de subsistances" to the batallions.[51] On June 2 when the movement to unseat the Girondins accelerated, and the insurrectional committee had the National Guard surround the Convention, the women went inside as part of delegation from the sections. Apparently they presented their own petition, but the content is not known.[52]

Eyewitness accounts of the women's role on June 2 are scarce but the Girondin Gorsas afterwards declared that the men who tried to stop the proscribed Girondins from escaping the Manège were assisted by "une troupe de femmes se disant révolutionnaires, troupe de furies, avide de carnage." He said that the women were armed and these "femmes sans pudeur retenaient captifs les députés." It appeared that one of the Girondins "poursuivi par 5 ou 6 de ces mégères, fut obligé de sauter par une croisée" in order to escape."[53] This same day a young woman said to be an ouvrière en linge was arrested in the courtyard of the Convention and was said to be "armée de poignards et de pistolets."[54]

The Girondin Buzot, writing of that day in his Mémoires, depicted the women as having played a major role in the events. He said that "une vieille barboteuse" of Paris commanded the women and "leurs poignards appartiennent à qui sait mieux les payer." He believed that Claire Lacombe was their leader and that she had "pris un grand empire." He stated that "dans les débats qui se préparent entre Robespierre et ses amis et Danton et les siens," Claire Lacombe, whom he called "cette impudique femelle," would be able "faire pencher la balance en faveur du parti pour lequel elle se déclarerait." He questioned the "excès d'infamie" to which the French people been driven. "Il se pourrait à la fin qu'à bien examiner les choses, les armées françaises ne se batissent, l'Assemblée de la nation ne se déshonorât, la fortune ne s'anéantît" and finally, "toute la république ne fût teinte du sang français que par les critiques des plus hideuses coquines de Paris." Buzot emphasized that if the Girondins had been counterrevolutionaries they would have been accepted by the Jacobins and the "club de femmes" due to perfidy, baseness, and crime. He added that in that case, surrounded by all that is the most despicable and corrupt in humanity, the Girondins would have "publiquement ou en secrete" responded to the circumstances and "remue cette boue et parte l'air infect qui en sort, dans toute la France par nos agents départementaux ou par les députès provinciaux dont nous eussions pris à nos gages la misère, la lâcheté ou les inclinaisons perverses."[55] But from the side of the victors in the insurrection, Jacques Roux, before the General Council of the Commune, praised the Citoyennes Republicaines for sharing "la gloire d'avoir sauvé la République dans les journées des 31 mai et 2 juin."[56]

In July, 1793 the citizenesses of the Section des Droits de l'Homme presented the Société des Citoyennes Républicaines with a flag on which was written the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The address given at that time congratulated the members of the society for their part in bringing about the fall of the Girondins. They were praised for their efforts to change women's place in society. "Vous avez rompu des anneaux de la chaîne des préjugés, il n'existe plus pour vous, celui qui reléguait les femmes dans la sphère etroite de leur ménage....Vous voulez tenir votre place dans l'ordre social, la neutralité vous offense, vous humilie....La liberté sourit à vos louables prétentions, elle en conçoit le plus favorable augure. Déjà elle vous vit sous sa bannière propager ses principes, vos missions apostoliques préparèrent la révolution mémorable du 31 mai, au milieu de son dernier triomphe." With regard to the role of the members in the events of those days, the spokeswoman praised them for their intelligence and determination, proclaiming them, "sentinelles vigilantes," occupying important positions with "fermeté" and "intrépidité." She stated, "votre mission était delicate,il y avait des bienséances à observer, et votre zèle qui sut se contenir dans des justes mesures facilita notre succès. Courage, persévérance, braves Républicaines."[57]

The evidence shows that the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines were indeed in the vanguard of the insurrection. It shows, in fact, that during the spring of 1793 the women were among the most active elements in the revolutionary movement. They agitated for and prepared the insurrection and participated in it in the Convention, the Commune, the sections, and on the streets. Many of the women who became involved, who sat in the galleries of the Convention and attended the section meetings, were not actually club members, but rather women who had responded to the call from the club and in rallying around the club standard had received the encouragement and support they needed to participate actively in the political life of the new nation.

C. The Summer of '93.

During the summer of 1793 the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines reached the apogee of their influence, their "days of glory," in which they participated with enthusiasm and determination in the political life of the nation. Those few weeks which followed the insurrection of May 31-June 2 were halcyon days for the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines. In the celebrations marking the completion of the new Montagnard Constitution on June 23, 1793, club members had a place of prominence. Their procession circled the altar of the patrie as the women sang hymns of praise to liberty. The next day in the Convention, the artist-deputy David paid homage to the women. He said that at the Champ de Mars it was these women, "véritables républicaines," and "meres de famille," who, by their example, "donnaient à leurs enfants les premieres leçons de la vertu." They were revered and applauded during the celebration. David stated that "trois fois elles firent le tour de l'autel de la patrie en chantant des hymnes saintes à la Liberté; trois fois le peuple repondit a ces accents si chers à son coeur."[58] The minutes of the general assembly of the forty-eight sections recorded on June 30 that "dans la cérémonie civique dont elles faisaient l'ornement, elles ont employé tout l'ascendant qu'elles ont sur les citoyens pour aiguillonner leur courage et les presser de voler combattre les rebelles."[59]

A longer letter from the same source, signed by Dufourney who was at that time president of the Commune, was sent to the Citoyennes Republicaines and said that "<elles> ont bien mérité de la patrie, leur zèle est infatigable, leur surveillance pénètre les complots, leur activité les déjoue, leur défiance écarte les intrigues, leur audace prévient les dangers, leur courage les surmonte." These women did not wish to be ~~slaves~~ but preferred the esteem of men who are themselves free. Furthermore, "elles raniment leur courage et n'accordent la couronne civique." They were wives and republicans, "leur foyers ne peuvent contenir l'abondance de leurs affections." They sacrificed their pleasures for their country, they armed their spouses and their children. The list of the virtues of the women was quite lengthy. "Elles repoussent les lâches, elles surveillent la fidélité aux serments, elles poursuivent et livrent les traîtres; elles méprisent la parure." Their diamonds were their cockades and their true place was under the tricolor flag. "Leurs danses entourent l'autel de la patrie, tous leurs chants célèbrent la liberté, et leurs transports les plus vifs sont pour la République." The participation, wisdom, and generosity of the women, in the eyes of their admirers, were boundless. "Ces héroïnes qui combattirent à la Bastille, qui allèrent à Versailles, qui avaient à venger leurs époux et leurs enfants immoler sur l'autel même de la patrie, et qui enfin, terrasserent les Suisses et la tyrannie, devenues aussi prudentes que courageuses, ont resisté à toutes les suggestions insidieuses." In the events of May 31-June 2, "elles ont reconnu que des hommes de sang voulaient faire donner le signal de la guerre civile par des femmes mêmes; elles ont frémi de voir le fléau de la guerre qui n'accable encore que la moitié de l'espèce humaine, s'étendre aussi sur l'autre moitié." They had disdained ultimately the power of force and had exercised only the power of persuasion. As well, they had taken over the doors and the seats in the Convention, maintained egality, intimidated the traitors, and largely prepared the insurrection. Although the enormous problems facing the Convention had impeded its ability to construct the Constitution, the women, with their "tendre sollicitude," had helped it recover and function effectively so that it was capable of producing the Constitution.[60]

Can these virtuous creatures be the same as those in the reports of the Girondins? Apparently so, but in this account of their activities "elles se sont répandues dans les groupes, elles ont montré le precipice, elles ont répandu les principes, et secondant les efforts des magistrats du peuple, elles ont bien mérité le témoignage qu'ils leurs rendent." The letter also reminded them of their continuing responsibilities. "Excitez le zèle, recommandez l'assiduité, presentez à vos epoux, vos enfants et leurs droits a la liberté, rappelez-leur les serments, et la patrie sera sauvée."[61]

Opinions vary with regard to who the women were that comprised the membership of the Citoyennes Républicaines. In his memoirs, the Girondin Buzot, erstwhile lover of Madame Roland, claimed that they were "femmes perdues ramasses dans les boues de la capitale, dont l'effronterie n'a d'égal que leur impudicité, monstres femelles qui ont toute la cruauté de la faiblesse et tous les vices de leur sexe."[62] Other hostile contemporaries called them "filles publiques," "malheureuses payées 20 sols par jour," and "viragos sans vergogne."[63] Perhaps worst of all, and adding insult to injury, the women were also accused of being ugly. It was said that "elles étaient toutes laides à faire peur"[64] and that they were "têtes de Meduses dont l'aspect pétrifie."[65] But ugliness was obviously not a prerequisite for membership, because both Claire Lacombe and Pauline Léon were reputed to be beautiful.

The club membership was plagued by accusations of immorality and it took action to refute these claims. On September 14 a delegation from the club presented at a meeting of the General Council of the Commune a proposal that they wished to take to the Convention. The purpose was to demand "la réclusion des filles publique et femmes suspectes, dont l'influence peut causer les plus grande maux."[66] They had proposed the same measures the previous day at the Jacobin Club and had been "vivement applaudie."[67] On September 18 at the evening session of the Convention, the women presented their proposal in an expanded form. They suggested that "les femmes de mauvaise vie" be transferred to "maisons nationales" and occupied there with useful work. The purpose would be to bring them back, if possible, to good morals by means of honest labour and patriotic lectures. The petition referred to "ces victimes du libertinage, dont souvent le coeur est bon, et que la misère seule a presque toujours réduites à cet état déplorable."[68] There were also club rules that emphasized the importance of good morals. In the preamble to the club's charter, the citoyennes proclaimed that "sans moeurs et sans principes il n'y a pas de liberté."[69] Article 12 emphasized the same qualities, stating that "la Societé, considérant que l'on ne s'associe que pour s'honorer, se soutenir et pour s'encourager dans son sein que des citoyennes de bonnes moeurs; elle a fait de cette conditon la plus essentielle pour l'admission et a voulu que le défaut de bonnes moeurs fût une des principales causes d'exclusion."[70]

Any analysis of the membership of the club by occupation is difficult because there are few documents which are relevant. Apparently there were, besides the actress, Claire Lacombe, and the chocolatière, Pauline Léon, two members known to be *mercières*, one printer, and two cake merchants from Nanterre. The former were

Justine Thibault, the roommate of Claire Lacombe, and the Citizeness Monic. Madame Coulombe was the proprietoress of the printshop of L'Ami du peuple. There were twelve other members for whom the records of the club furnish a profession. There were included in the membership a former hat seller, a meat seller, a laundress, a seamstress, two ouvrières en linge, the wife of a gas fitter, a polisher, a shoemaker, two cooks, and the wife of a harness-maker.[71] It appears that the women, although not highly educated, were capable for the most part of reading and writing. Only seven of twenty-two women for whom this information is available could not sign their names. It is necessary to note, however, that most of the women for whom information is available were the club's officials. The educational level of the simple members would be impossible to determine with accuracy.[72]

At the end of July or beginning of August the club moved its meetings from the library of the Jacobin convent to the charniers of Saint-Eustache and this was to be its meeting place until its demise at the end of October. Women who were not members could observe the meetings if they were recommended by two members. The society wished to maintain ties with other revolutionary societies and over the months asked for affiliation with various other clubs in Paris. A contemporary source offers a rare and fascinating if biased account of a meeting of the Citoyennes Républicaines dating from early August, 1793.[73]

P. J. A. Roussel, who wrote under the name Prousinalle, said he attended the meeting because he was curious to learn about the women and their concerns and activities. The president and secretaries faced the door, the sixty-six members sat on two rows of benches on each side facing the officials. The observer declared that "ce spectacle grotesque, faillit nous faire étouffer par la contrainte ou nous etions pour ne pas laisser éclater notre rire." First, the president introduced the evening's topic which was to be a discussion of women's usefulness to a republican government. She asked those who had done research on the topic to speak. Citoyenne Monic took up the challenge and appears to have given a rousing recital, complete with historical allusions. "Les femmes peuvent former des bataillons, commander les armées, combattre et vaincre aussi bien que les hommes. Si l'on voulait encore douter, je citerais, Pantée, Ingonde, Clothild, Isabelle, Marguerite." And she asked the men "qui se croient nos maîtres" who it was that "delivre Judée et la Syrie de la tyrannie d'Holofernes?" It was Judith. "A qui Rome a-t-elle du sa liberté et sa République? A deux femmes."[74]

The speaker next applauded the performance of women in the Revolution, both at the Bastille and at Versailles. "Au siège de la Bastille, des femmes qui ne connaissaient que les feux d'artifices, s'exposèrent à celui du canon et de la mousquieterie des remparts, pour apporter de munitions aux assaillans." In

October, 1789 "ce fut un bataillon de femmes, commandés par la brave Reine Audu, qui fut chercher le despote à Versailles, et l'amenèrent en triomphe à Paris, après avoir combattu et fait mettre bas les armes aux gardes-du-corps." She then included the feats of the club's president, Claire Lacombe, on the tenth of August. "Elle marcha vaillament contre le château, à la tête d'un corps de fédérés; elle porte encore les marques de cette journée." Citoyenne Monic then alluded to those women who had "gouverne avec gloire," naming, among others, Isabelle of Spain, Catherine of Russia, and Catherine de Medici. She concluded with a request that "la société examine dans sa sagesse le rang que les femmes doivent tenir en république, et s'il faut continuer à les exclure de toutes les places et administrations."[75]

During this meeting at least, the emphasis appears to have been on encouraging women to participate, on bolstering their courage and self-esteem, and convincing them that women do possess attributes necessary for meaningful political participation. Citizeness Monic's presentation was met with almost frenetic approval. "Ce discours, souvent interrompu, finit par être couronné de violens applaudissemens."[76]

The comments of this male observer are worth noting. "Rien ne nous parut plus comique que d'entendre des passages de l'histoire débites par une femmes qui écorchait tous les mots avec une assurance difficile à décrire." He stated that the applause was accompanied by a long murmur followed in turn by "des propositions plus ridicules les unes que les autres." One suggestion involved an army of thirty-thousand women "pour aller combattre les ennemis, et que toutes les filles publiques fussent forcer de marcher." Another suggestion, regarded as ridiculous by the observer was "qu'on admit des femmes dans toutes les parties de l'administration."[77]

Next at the tribune was Olympe de Gouges. Although she apparently was never affiliated with any specific club, she obviously felt it was worthwhile to express her ideas before a group of women with some type of organized political objectives. She is reported to have stated that "l'homme isolé est notre esclave; ce n'est que réunis en masse qu'ils nous accablent de leur orgueil. La plus grande faute qu'ait commise notre sexe, a été de se soumettre à ce coutume gênant, qui fait tout l'ascendant de l'homme." Women, she said, should marry only men who would fight for their countries. If the man in question did not agree, she said, "lui prononcer ces mots: Rester, âme pusillanime; mais ne comptez jamais être uni à votre amante; elle a fait le serment de rejeter les voeux de l'homme inutile à son pays." She added that women should demand to direct celebrations, marriages, and education of the young. They would replace the existing priests and start a religion "des vrais sans-culottes."[78]

Roussel's mocking description of the Citoyennes Républicaines obviously fails to do them justice, for the club was a far more serious political entity than he cared to indicate.

The problems encountered by the women were not always the result of male attitudes. As could be expected during a time of such great change, all elements of the female population did not always act together in harmony. Even the club membership became polarized in their revolutionary efforts, and there existed many factions within the broader female population, exclusive of the club, which held their own views on the revolutionary situation. As we have observed, Théroigne de Méricourt, as a supporter of the Girondins, was publicly humiliated for her opposition to the political views of the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines. There was also the situation with the women of Les Halles. Although the marketwomen recognized the need for change, they despised the revolution, protested the persecution of the priests, and interacted violently with the women who wore the "bonnets rouges," the Citoyennes Républicaines. They were regarded by some as "aristocrates" and said to be as much a threat to the Convention in their own way as the Citoyennes Républicaines were in theirs. As the summer progressed the polarization of the women became more and more extreme. The Citoyennes Républicaines membership, seething with a need to improve its plight, and the "aristocrates" of the marketplace, many of whom had ties to the old order, exhibited a growing animosity toward one another. The spirit of free enterprise that dominated the market clashed resoundingly with the demands of the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines for economic controls.

Even though the Girondins had been removed from power the scarcity of the basic necessities of life remained. From the middle of June onward the women of Paris expressed their discontent with the standard of living forced upon them. The rumours of hoarding had not been stilled and the women advocated stringent punishments for this offence. The "red priest," Jacques Roux, a leader of the faction of the "enragés," for whom women of the Citoyennes Républicaines often expressed sympathy, on June 25 addressed the Convention with a request for a regulated economy because, he said, "la liberté n'est qu'un vain fantôme quand une classe d'hommes peut affamer l'autre impunément. L'égalite n'est qu'un vain fantôme quand le riche, par le monopole, exerce le droit de vie et de mort sur son semblable." He questioned whether the Convention had taken any steps at all to alleviate the worsening economic situation and emphasized the misery pervasive among the people. Roux was chased from the Convention by the enraged Jacobins, with the deputy Legendre proclaiming that "il y a des patriotes dans sa section, il en feront eux-mêmes justice."[79]

The same day that Jacques Roux incensed the deputies with his call for action on the economic front, groups of women chose to act out their frustration in the streets of Paris. That afternoon a group of laundry women stopped two wagons loaded with soap on the Rue Saint-Lazare. The women believed that the merchandise was destined for hoarders and were determined to stop its delivery. They imposed taxation populaire on the spot, fixing the price of soap at 20 sols per livre.

Their actions marked the beginning of three days of rioting in the streets of Paris. Despite the fact that the women of the Citoyennes Republicaines membership had growing reservations about the unwillingness of the Jacobin Convention to act for the good of the people, they did not participate in the riots of these days but rather attempted to calm the women as they expressed their frustrations in the streets of the capital. The minutes of the Paris Commune for June 27 report that "une députation de la Société des Républicaines Révolutionnaires fait part au conseil de la conduite qu'elles ont tenue dans cette journée, ou elles sont parvenues à retirer de leur erreur plusieurs citoyennes égarées."[80] The next day the trouble started again and spread to other sections. Rumour had it that the boats arriving in the Paris ports would have to return to Rouen with their cargo intact. At six a.m. the women gathered at the bridges Royal and Carrousel and distributed soap at the newly fixed price. The Montagnard Couthon described the situation to the deputies in the Convention as follows: "Il est très certain qu'hier on avait répandu le bruit que quelques bateaux chargés de savon, venus de Rouen, retournaient dans cette ville....Les malveillants ont bientôt fait croire que c'etait une suite du système avec lequel on cherche à désapprovisionner Paris, et que dans peu il n'y arriverait plus rien. Le peuple a été effrayé, d'autant plus qu'à Evreaux on avait arrête plusieurs voitures de beurre." Then he directly implicated the women. "Quelques femmes, cédant a leurs terreurs, se portèrent au part de la Grenouillère, où l'on a vendu huit caisses de savon; de la au port Saint-Nicholas, ou l'on fait la même chose." He went on to complain that the rioters would not listen to reason and that further measures must be taken.[81] An attempt was made by Commune officials to calm the women but at the same time in another part of Paris, on the Rue de Provence, a group of women forced a police officer to visit a house where they suspected soap was being hoarded. In the afternoon a group of more than a thousand woman confiscated a wagon of soap near the Champs-Elysees.[82]

The rioters were mainly the women of the Parisian working class, exclusive, of course of the members of the Citoyennes Républicaines.[83] The group included laundresses, merchants from Les Halles, street pedlars, seamstresses, wives of small artisans, bricklayers, and haulers of water. The participants accused the

National Guard and passersby of being hoarders, bourgeois, and aristocrats.[84] They were increasingly afraid that Paris would be deprived of provisions and famine would result. After three days the rioting subsided but the precarious position of the new Jacobin government was by no means secure.

By mid-July the honeymoon of the Citoyennes Republicaines with the Jacobins was coming to an end. The attitudes of the membership were growing closer to those of the women whom they had termed "égarées" during the June soap riots. The women of the Citoyennes Républicaines had also detached themselves from Jacques Roux shortly after his appearance before the Convention on June 24. On July 13 Marat was assassinated by Charlotte Corday, a supporter of the Girondins, who had come to Paris from Caen for the express purpose of killing Marat. The patriots in the capital mourned Marat in a manner bordering on the fanatical, the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines not excluded. They felt that they must in some way compensate for the fact that the "père du peuple" had met his death at the hands of a member of their sex. The details of his funeral were announced in the Convention on July 16 by David. "Il a été arrêté que son corps serait exposé, couvert d'un drap mouillé qui représenterait sa baignoire, et qui, arrosé de temps en temps, empêcherait l'effet de la putréfaction. Il sera inhumé aujourd'hui, à cinq heures du soir, sous les arbres où il se plaisait à instruire ses concitoyens."[85] The Citoyennes

Républicaines and many supporters turned out in great numbers to mourn publicly the death of the "ami du peuple."

The body was displayed at the church of the Cordeliers. On one side was Marat's bathtub and on the other side was his bloodied shirt. When the cortege left the church for burial in the garden it took a very long route and the women took care to mourn noticeably, swear revenge, throw flowers, and display the tub and shirt to onlookers. They had decorated the victim's head with a wreath and made sure the the wound inflicted by Corday's knife was visible to onlookers. The Courrier universel reported on July 19 that the Citoyennes Republicaines had sent a deputation to the Convention demanding vengeance for the assassination of Marat. The members swore to follow until death "les ennemis de la liberté et d'imprimer sur leur front le caractère de l'ignominie."[86] The same day a deputation stated that "elles vont peupler la terre de la liberté d'autant de Marat que d'enfants que les Républicaines révolutionnaires pourront en posséder, qu'elles élèveront ces enfants dans le culte de Marat, et jurant de mettre entre leurs mains d'autre évangile que la collection de Marat avec une pièce de vers à sa mémoire, et flétrissant 'l'infernale furie enfantée par la race de Caen.'"[87]

On July 24 the Citoyennes Republicaines sent a deputation to the Commune with several requests. The Moniteur of July 27 reported that the spokeswoman asked that an address be made to the

Convention "pour l'inviter à faire disparaître de dessus les assignats l'effigie du dernier de nos tyrans." She also requested that the Convention be asked to take action to stop the hoarding of coal. And finally "elle <la députation> termine, pour faire diversion aux deux premiers objets, par demander qu'il soit élevé un obélisque à la memoire de Marat, en face du Palais National." In response the president stated that "le conseil applaudit au civisme de ces citoyennes, et les invite à la séance."[88] On July 28 the women participated in the ceremony of the translation of the heart of Marat. Attended by representatives of the Convention, the Commune, and the popular societies, the ceremony saw the heart of the people's idol enclosed in a magnificent vase and placed in the meeting room of the Cordeliers. On July 31 the citoyennes again addressed the Commune on the same topic, this time explaining that "il n'y a plus un assez long intervalle d'ici au 10 août" when major celebrations were scheduled. The commissaires of the forty-eight sections and the citizens of the popular societies asked to be authorised to erect this obelisk on the Place de la Réunion. "Le conseil les autorise à élever provisoirement, avant le 10 août, un obélisque en bois, en attendant que l'on ait consacré, par un monument durable, la mémoire de Marat."[89] Permission to erect the obelisk was actually granted to groups other than the Citoyennes Républicaines although they had put the idea forward initially. This was indicative of the rapidly deteriorating relations between the Jacobin Convention and the women's group.

The Jacobin Mountain was supported by the Hébertist Commune and the journal Père Duchesne, but the women of the Citoyennes Republicaines were exhibiting a definite tendency to stray from the paths of loyalty to this new government which they had been instrumental in bringing to power. However, as late as August 10, 1793 the women were the recipients of more praise from the president of the Convention, at that time Hérault de Séchelles, during the fête de l'Unité et de l'Indivisibilité. "Quel spectacle! la faiblesse du sexe et l'héroîsme du courage. O liberté! Ce sont là tes miracles! C'est toi qui dans ces deux journées oü le sang à Versailles, commença à expier les crimes des rois, allumas dans le coeur de quelques femmes cette audace qui fit fuir ou tomber devant elles les satellites des tyrans!" He continued, saying, "O femmes! la liberté, attaquée par tous les tyrans, pour être défendue, a besoin d'un peuple de héros. C'est à vous de l'enfanter. Que toutes les vertus guerrières et généreuses coulent avec le lait maternal dans le coeur des nourrissons de la France!" He then presented the women with a branch of laurel, "emblème du courage et de la victoire."[90]

David, the artist, Montagnard deputy and spokesperson for the committee of public instruction, described the women's participation as follows: "On rencontrera, sous un portique ou arc

de triomphe, les héroïnes du 5 et 6 octobre 1789, assises commes elles étaient alors sur leurs canons; les unes porteront des branches d'arbre, les autres des trophées, signe non équivoque de la victoire éclatante que ces courageuses citoyennes remportèrent sur les serviles gardes du corps." He continued, "sur le monument il y aura des inscriptions qui retraceront ces deux mémorables journées."[91] On one side was inscribed "5 et 6 octobre; le peuple, comme un torrent, inonda leurs portiques, ils disparurent." On the other side was written, "Comme une vile proie, elles ont chassé le tyran devant elles."[92]

The women had initially wished to have the dedication of the obelisk take place concurrently with the fête of August 10, but it did not occur until August 18. A deputation from the club appeared at the bar of the Convention and asked that "la Convention envoie une députation à une cérémonie en l'honneur de Marat, l'Ami du peuple (érection d'un obélisque), avec décret de la Convention, décidant qu'une députation de 24 membres assistera à la cérémonie."[93] L'Ami du Peuple announced the order of proceedings, at the request of the Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires. "Les citoyens et citoyennes se rassembleront au lieu des séances de cette Société à trois heures précises du soir, au charnier Saint-Eustache. Le cortège défilera par la pointe Saint-Eustache, le marché aux poires, les rues de la Ferronnerie et Saint-Honoré, pour se rendre par celle de Saint-Niçaise, à la place de la Réunion où la ceremonie aura lieu."[94]. Once again the bathtub was resurrected and carried in the procession. Its purpose was to recall the horror of the crime and the murder of the patriot. Four women carried Marat's chair, table, writing desk, pen, and paper. The obelisk appears to have been financed through donations. The Jacobin society on August 15 recorded that the Citoyenne Léon at the head of a delegation of the Citoyennes Républicaines requested "que les Jacobins contribuent aux frais de l'obélisque éleve à Marat."[95]

After the ceremony which had occupied the time and thought of the Citoyennes Républicaines membership for at least three weeks had taken place, it was time to get on with other projects. On the same day, August 18, the women made an announcement in the Jacobin club. "La citoyenne Lacombe, à la tête d'une députation des républicaines révolutionnaires, vient annoncer que les citoyennes révolutionnaires vont s'occuper du salut public, comme les Jacobins. On applaudit."[96] This announcement opened what was to be the final round in the political participation of the Citoyennes Républicaines. The foundations for this had been laid on July 17, three days after the death of Marat, when a deputation from the Citoyennes Républicaines had addressed the Convention. They had sworn that "elles vont peupler la terre de la liberté d'autant de Marat que d'enfants que les Républicaines révolutionnaires pourront de posséder" and that they wished to educate their children far from the institutions that had "trop longtemps avilirent le genre humain."[97] After this statement of aims the women had remained silent for almost a month, concentrating mainly on honoring Marat and grieving for him. During this time the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines were out of the mainstream of the nation's political life and they rejoined it only after the ceremony of August 18. Previously the women had expressed their wishes to see nobles excluded from certain types of work that were essential to the livelihood of the poor, and particularly from military offices. Even earli[illegible] on May 19, in their common petition with the Cordeliers, they had asked for the arrest of suspects, the formation of a tribunal to deal with them, and a revolutionary army. [98] Now during the crucial weeks of July and August when the Convention was dealing with these very issues, the voice of the Citoyennes Républicaines was silent. Just as the membership of the Citoyennes Républicaines was distancing itself from the government, it is quite possible that the government was beginning to withdraw the pillar of support provided up until that time to the women's club.

Throughout the summer months the Citoyennes Républicaines maintained and even strengthened its ties with the enrages. Although they had severed ties with Roux in June, they were still entwined with Hebert and especially Théophile Leclerc. Both Claire

Lacombe and Pauline Léon were in fact romantically involved with the latter at different times during the life of the club. Dissensions occurred because not all members subscribed to this enragé perspective, which was fostered by Lacombe and Léon. There existed other members who were closer followers of Hebert and Robespierre and at times the emotions and beliefs of the club members were far from harmonious. Club members, after their declaration to the Jacobins on August 18, began to circulate their petition that outlined the basis for the public welfare as they visualized it. Its reception in the popular societies was positive and on August 26 a deputation from the club presented itself at the bar of the Convention. Claire Lacombe presented the petition. She began by protesting the "prévarications sans nombre" which had taken place, particularly in the ministry of the interior. She announced that the women had come to demand the implementation of the new Constitution. She complained that "nous ne l'avons pas demandée à si grands cris cette constitution, pour qu'elle puisse impunément être violée." It was not enough to have made the laws. It was also necessary that the people should experience some happy effects. The people saw with indignation that "des hommes s'engraissent de son sang tandis qu'il périt de misère." She stated that the women no longer believed in the virtue of these people who covered themselves in a mantle of patriotism "pour se livrer impunément à l'injustice et au brigandage" and said that the women knew that the nobles had defenders within the Convention. "Déstituez-les <nobles> de tous les places qu'ils occupent. Ne dites pas que ce serait désorganiser nos armées en les privant de chefs expérimentés; plus ils ont des talents, plus ils sont dangereux." The perfidious nobles should be replaced with brave soldiers who, up until that time, had been supplanted due to intrigue. "Si, sous le règne du despotisme, le crime avait la préférence, sous le règne de la liberte le mérite seul doit être honoré." On the subject of the treatment of suspects, the women's petition questioned the executive power and its use of authority. Lacombe had this to say: "Vous avez décreté que les hommes suspects seraient mis en état d'arrestation; mais n'est-ce pas la une loi dérisoire, lorsque les hommes suspects sont ceux-là même qui sont chargés de la faire exécuter?" Was this the compensation that the people would receive for the misfortunes they had suffered for liberty? "Non, il ne sera pas dit que le peuple sera obligé de se faire justice lui-même: vous allez decréter la destitution de tous les administrateurs traîtres à leurs devoirs; décrétez de tous les ci-devant nobles; décrétez la levée des hommes en masse, et vous aurez sauvé la patrie."[99]

The women of the general population had concerns other than those of the public welfare as presented by the Citoyennes Republicaines that day in their petition. Throughout the summer months the capital had been plagued with a severe shortage of bread and on September 5 the women rose in protest. Although the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines were not without interest in the problem of subsistences, it definitely was secondary to their main political concerns during the first four months of the club's existence. A noticeable scarcity of protest with regard to shortages had emanated from the club during this time. There had been reference to it only twice before September.[100] The women of the Citoyennes Républicaines were slow to become involved in the economic aspect of problems which women were facing at this time due to a club orientation that was strongly political in nature. This unmistakable political bent gives the lie to the assertion that the women's only motive for revolutionary involvement stemmed from their roles as housewives. However, the hardship of the summer of 1793 resulted in a change in attitude. Flour was scarce in the capital and women stood in long bread lines for hours, sometimes rising as early as two a.m. in the hope of being able to buy bread before the meagre supply had been depleted. At this time the members of the Citoyennes Républicaines did become involved. Police records of that summer describe the incidents which sometimes occurred at the bakers' doors while the women waited, losing money every moment from their small wages if they had to remain past the time when their own work began. Often they received no bread after a long and miserable wait. The Commune attempted to deal with the problem, decreeing on September 6 that "il est défendu à tout bon citoyen de se rendre aux portes desdits boulangers, avant six heures du matin, les sections enverront, chacune dans leurs arrondissement, une force imposante à la porte de chaque boulanger, pour y maintenir le bon ordre et faciliter la distribution aux bons républicains, qui aiment les lois, leurs magistrats et leur pays."[101] Two days later the report of the police observer Rousseville stated that as a consequence of the decree of the sixth, "le peuple ne s'est trouvé aux portes des boulangers qu'entre 4 heures et 4 heures et demie du matin, et le tumulte a été moins grand que de coutume."[102]

Equally as aggravating as the shortage of bread was the shortage of coal and of other basic necessities. The masses believed that they too were entitled to a lifestyle which at least alleviated abject misery. They felt that some legislation should be passed to ensure such a change, that it should be complement to the political terror which was being demanded and that it should outlaw hoarding and alleviate tax burdens on the poor. The insurrection of the first week in September found its basis in these issues. The Club des Citoyennes Républicaines served mainly as a vociferous complainant on the subject of hoarding during the latter part of August. One example of this involvement was the Auger case. The executive members of the Citoyennes Républicaines persuaded the employees of Auger, wholesaler, to report on the details of his business, in which he profited from the sale of food. The women of the Citoyennes Républicaines executive met with their informants and composed a denunciation of Auger which they delivered on the 21 of August to the revolutionary committee of Auger's section and to the General Council.[103]

The escalating discontent of the population resulted in a major disruption in the Convention on September 4. A deputation from the people was allowed to enter and "elle est suivie d'un nombre immense de citoyens." Women were definitely present. "Bientôt tout le parquet est couvert de citoyens et de citoyennes; le cri de vive la république! se fait plusieurs fois entendre." In the crowd there were citizens carrying signs which read, "Guerre aux tyrans, guerre aux aristocrates, guerre aux accapareurs." At the head of the deputation were several officers of the Commune and the mayor. The spokesman for the deputation had already delivered his message before his followers were invited "aux honneurs de la seance" by Robespierre, the president. Introduced by the Mayor, the procureur of the Commune, Chaumette, presented the petition. He articulated the sources of the people's discontent, saying that a new class of tyrants had arisen, "non moins cruel, non moins avides, non moins insolents que les anciens" and that they were "élevés sur les ruines de la féodalité." These people, he said, had bought the property of their ancient masters and "<ils> continuent à marcher dans les sentiers battus par le crime, à spéculer sur la misère publique, à tarir les sources de l'abondance, et à tyranniser les destructeurs de la tyrannie." Another class, just as greedy, just as criminal as the first "s'est emparée des denrées de première nécessité; vous l'avez frappée, mais vous ne l'avez qu'étourdie; et à l'ombre même des lois elle continue ses brigandages." He stated that the deputies had made wise laws that promised happiness but had failed to implement them because the executive power had been weak.[104]

Chaumette then appealed for the immediate formation of an "armée révolutionnaire" so that the people's request for "des subsistances, et pour en avoir, force à la loi" would be implemented. The deputation, he stated, was requesting "paix aux hommes de bonne volonté, guerre aux affameurs, protection aux faibles; guerre aux tyrans, justice et point d'expression." Chaumette also described the insurrection itself stating that an "immense rassemblement des citoyens" met the evening before and that morning "sur la place et dans l'intérieur de la maison commune."[105] The insurrection was by no means small, there were definitely women present, and among those women were members of the Citoyennes Republicaines. This day, September 5, is often taken to mark the beginning of the Terror. It was during the Convention's debates that Billaud-Varenne advocated that terror should be the order of the day and that all dissenting elements, all enemies of the revolution should be tried before a revolutionary tribunal and, if found guilty, sentenced to death.[106]

D. The Mountain Against the Citoyennes Républicaines.

Although the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines by their actions from the spring through the insurrection of September 5, 1793 had helped bring the Mountain to power and to install the great Committee of Public Safety with its policy of Terror, the organization itself would before the end of 1793 fall victim to the Terror, along with several of the leading female figures of the Revolution.

The women of the Citoyennes Républicaines continued to have friendly relations in September with the Paris Jacobin Club, but in various ways their relationship with the Jacobin government deteriorated. On September 13 the Citoyennes Républicaines presented their famous address to the Jacobin Club requesting "l'incarcération des femmes publiques" as well as those "suspectée d'aristocratie".[107] Also on this day the minutes of the Jacobin Club record that there had been a complaint by a deputation from a fraternal society that many patriotic women wearing the national cockade were subjected to insults on a regular basis. This deputation requested "un décret qui ordonne à toutes les femmes de se décorer de cette cocarde." The deputation which would present these demands to the Convention was asked to meet the following Sunday in the meeting room of the fraternal society.[108] This latter request focused on the other issue which had been a continuing problem for the women.

Since April the wearing of the tricolour cockade was decreed by the Convention to be compulsory, but no one knew if this decree included women. The Citoyennes Républicaines had from their beginning embraced the wearing of the tricolour. The club informed the Jacobins that their membership would wear it and sent an address to the forty-eight sections as well, inviting all citizenesses to follow their example. However, the wearing of the cockade came to symbolize affiliation with the Jacobins whose enemies began to maltreat the wearers. Several incidents were reported over the summer months which involved altercations among groups of women in regard to the cockade. In June members of the Citoyennes Republicaines complained of having been beaten up for wearing it. By August the conflict had escalated considerably and by mid-September reports of beatings in the streets were common. For example, it was reported that on September 14 in the Faubourg St.-Germain "les femmes du quartier s'opposant au passage de toutes celles qui n'en portaient pas, les poissardes ont étrillé les opposantes et leur ont promis le même traitement pour le lendemain."[109] The same day the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines made a two-fold presentation to the General Council of the Commune. The first section contained their request that prostitutes and women suspected of being "aristocrates" be confined because their influence could cause "les plus grands maux." The second part consisted of a complaint that "toutes les citoyennes ne portent pas la cocarde tricolore."[110] During the same meeting a deputation from the Société Fraternelle de l'Unité complained of the insultes "qu'éprouve journellement la cocarde nationale sur la tête des femmes patriotes." The deputation demanded a decree that all women wear the cockade. On the eighteenth an old woman was whipped and her clothes torn for not wearing the tricolor. At the same time women at Les Halles were chased for wearing it.[111] A police report of the twentieth stated that "si l'on ne supprime pas les cocardes, ou, si l'on n'ordonne pas à toutes les femmes d'en porter, il arrivera de fâcheux événements." In some sections it was being trampled, in others, treated with more respect than ever. "Tandis qu'aux portes Saint-Denis et Saint-Martin on fustige les femmes qui en portent, à la Halle on menace de poignarder celles qui n'en ont pas."[112] Another report of the same day said that in some of the markets "les femmes patriotes ont été insultees par les poissardes, qui ne toléraient point de cocardes, et même ont été fouettées au marché Saint-Eustache."[113]

On September 20 it was reported by the police observer La Tour-la-Montagne that "il règne toujours une grande fermentation parmi les femmes, excitée par les malveillants pour susciter des mouvements dans Paris, sous le voile de la cocarde." Before yesterday, he stated, "on fouettait les femmes qui ne la portaient pas," but yesterday the women who wore it were threatened. "Les femmes du marché Saint-Martin étaient armées de verges et tenaient les propos les plus inciviques." This "guerre de cocardes," in the observer's opinion, masked a wider and much more serious discontent. "Cette fermentation n'est point partielle, mais générale, ces femmes s'accordent toutes sur un point, le besoin d'un nouvel ordre de choses, qui les tire de la misère ou elles se disent plongées." The women, he said, were complaining to all the authorities, demanding the renewal of the Convention, of the administrations, and most shockingly of all he believed that "si elles n'ont pas encore le nom de Roi dans la bouche, il est bien à craindre qu'elles ne l'aient déjà dans le coeur." A woman in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, he reported, was heard to say, "si nos maris ont fait la Révolution, nous saurons bien faire, nous, la contre-révolution, si elle est nécessaire."[114]

The women continued to act out their discontent. The next day the observer Rousseville stated in his report that "les femmes se tiennent en grand nombre à la porte des boulangers, celles qui se trouvaient rue de Sèvres, se plaignaient des femmes à cocarde et disaient qu'elles aimaient mieux acheter du pain."[115]

On September 21 a deputation of members from the Paris police administration appeared at the Convention and denounced the violence perpetrated by "les femmes des ennemis de l'intérieur" against "les citoyennes patriotes" who wore the tricolour. The deputation requested punishment for "ceux qui arracheraient la cocarde tricolore à ceux ou à celles qui sont honorablement décorés de ce signe de ralliement de patriotisme." One of the deputies converted the petition to a motion, saying "je demande que toutes les femmes soient tenues de porter la cocarde nationale; car dès qu'il existe des divisions ou des craintes de troubles sur cet usage civique, la loi doit intervenir, et la cause doit se décider en faveur du patriotisme." This proposition was decreed and the members of the Convention passed to the order of the day, having made law the punishment of those who dared to insult the national colors.[116] But later in the day the decree was discussed at some length again in the Convention. A secretary read a summary of it and two members spoke. Representative Mailhe asked that any woman "qui négligerait d'en porter une soit regardée comme contre-révolutionnaire et suspecte, et traitée comme tel." The other member who spoke was Jullien, deputy from Toulouse, who felt that the measure was "rigoureuse." He argued that a woman could have lost her cockade or simply forgotten to put one on.

That would not be a crime. However, he emphasized that such an oversight might be carried out deliberately by a woman of royalist persuasion. "Il faut atteindre enfin cette branche de contre-révolutionnaires qui, par son influence et sociale et physique, peut beaucoup sur l'opinion." He then made a suggestion "qui peut concilier tous les intérêts." He suggested that "la première fois qu'une femme sera trouvée sans cocarde, elle sera punie de huit jours de clôture; la seconde fois, regardée comme suspecte, et enfermée jusqu'à la paix." Jullien's proposals passed into law. With regard to Mailhe's proposal the Convention decreed that "toute femme qui se permettra d'arracher la cocarde d'une autre sera punie de six ans de réclusion."[117] The next day a police report stated that the decree had not achieved the desired effects and troublemakers (male) had been overheard in the Jardin de l'Egalité telling the women "qu'elles ont autant des droits que les hommes au gouvernement de leur pays, qu'elles doivent réclamer le droit de vote dans les sections et peuvent prétendre à tous les emplois civils et militaires." The police observateur did state that in general "on peut dire que ce décret a reçu l'assentiment général."[118] On the same day another report stated that "le décret, enjoignant aux femmes indistinctement de porter la cocarde, a mis fin à une foule de petites insurrections, qui auraient fini par devenir dangereuses, le peuple en général y applaudit avec enthousiasme."[119]

Despite such reports agitation was still rife among the women. On the same day, September 22, Rousseville reported that the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines had met with officials of the section Croix-Rouge and demanded ministerial responsibility, the organization of four revolutionary tribunals, the execution of Marie Antoinette and Brissot within a week, and the nomination of a central committee, composed of deputies from all the sections.[120]

Meanwhile, their president, Claire Lacombe, was leading the group increasingly in opposition to the government and increasingly into disfavor. Known for her affiliation with the Enragés, and her outspoken support for their programs and anti-Jacobin criticisms, her problems had crystallized in a meeting of the Jacobin club on September 16. A secretary had announced that the Societé des Femmes révolutionnares was taking the part of Leclerc, who was a friend of Jacques Roux, and that Claire Lacombe had written to the woman who had denounced Leclerc to the Committee of Public Safety and demanded that she appear and explain her conduct. One of the members of the Jacobin club, Basire, stated that the women had also sent a delegation to the same committee requesting the release of one Semandy.[121] Semandy had been denounced and was imprisoned. The women had also tried to intervene on behalf of the mayor of Toulouse, a known aristocrat, and secure his release. At this time, the minutes of the meeting record that a citizen "commence par attribuer aux femmes tous les troubles qui sont arrivés à Paris." Taschereau, another member, stated "que la citoyenne Lacombe se fourre partout" and said that at a meeting he had attended elsewhere "elle demanda d'abord la Constitution, toute la Constitution, rien que la Constitution" in language "hypocrite" et "feuillantin." After this "elle voulut saper les bases de la Constitution, et renverser les autorités constituées de toute espèce."[122] The next speaker stated that Lacombe "est fort dangereuse en ce qu'elle est fort éloquente; elle parle bien d'abord, et attaque ensuite les autorités constituées, comme on vous l'a dit. Elle a tiré à boulets rouges, dans un discours que j'ai entendu, et sur les Jacobins et sur la Convention." According to the minutes, Claire Lacombe appeared at that moment in the gallery and this caused a great commotion. In fact the minutes record that "le tumulte et le trouble deviennent si forts que le président se couvre; ce n'est qu'au bout d'un assez long temps que le calme renaît."[12[illegible]] The report of this meeting in the Moniteur is more detailed. Chabot stated that Lacombe's proposals were "le plus feuillants" in nature. She had stated that certain prisoners could not be held in prison any longer as they must be interrogated within twenty-four hours; "il fallait... les mettre en liberté s'ils étaient innocents, et les envoyer promptement à la guillotine s'ils étaient coupables" and she had dared to attack

Robespierre, and "l'appeler M. Robespierre!" Chabot concluded by demanding that the club authorise "des mesures violentes" against the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines. Bazire then gave details of his encounter with Claire Lacombe where she had come to the Committee of Public Safety as part of a deputation from the club and had asked to be given access to the prisons and permission to free the prisoners if she thought it appropriate. He concluded by requesting that the Citoyennes Républicaines be forced to purge their membership "de toutes ces femmes dont l'esprit a gâté la Société."[124] Ultimately it was decreed unanimously that the club should divest itself of all members suspected of being enemies of the nation and that it should turn them in to the Committee of General Security. An amendment was added to the effect that Claire Lacombe should be taken before the Committee immediately.[125] Claire Lacombe was not allowed to speak during the meeting. A few days later she posted a lengthy report of the incident, giving details of her humiliation. She stated that "<il> serait difficile à décrire les effets que produisis ma juste demande." The women of the gallery "se levant en majeur partie, en criant à bas l'Intrigante, à bas la nouvelle Corday" and, by threatening to cut her into pieces, caused her to fear for her life. She was then surrounded by "un grand nombre de soi-disant Membres" who used the same language as the women had and the "majorité des Tribunes applaudit avec transport à ce mouvement insense."[126] Lacombe was taken before the Committee of General Security but was released during the night.

This episode demonstrates the split that had occurred among the women of Paris and even between members of the Club des Citoyennes Républicaines itself. There were those who still followed Lacombe and supported her association with the Enrages. Others adhered to the Jacobins and favored the increasing alienation of the Lacombe faction from that group. Throughout the autumn the women fought each other in the streets over issues involving lack of food and basic necessities, the wearing of the tricolour, and support or non-support of the Jacobins. The reports of the police observers continued to describe the general unrest.

From the beginning of October the women's political thrust underwent a rapid denouement and organized involvement unravelled at breakneck speed. On October 6 the Société des Hommes du 10 août denounced the Citoyennes Républicaines to the Convention, citing "des intentions inciviques de plusieurs femmes se disant révolutionnaires" as the basis for their complaint, and they asked for "la dissolution de la Société qu'elles ont formée entre elles."[127] The next day, Claire Lacombe, at the head of a delegation of the Citoyennes Républicaines, addressed the Convention. She stated that "des intrigants, des calomniateurs, ne pouvant nous trouver des crimes, ont osé nous assimiler à des médicis, à une Elisabeth d'Angleterre, à une Antoinette, à une

Charlotte Corday." She declared that in the latter nature had indeed produced a monster, but denied that the Citoyennes Republicaines had any responsibility or connection with the female assassin of Marat. Her next statement contained a severe condemnation of men. "Nous sommes plus généreuses que les hommes, notre sexe n'a produit qu'un monstre, tandis que depuis quatre ans nous sommes trahis, assassinés par les monstres sans nombre qu'a produits le sexe masculin." She concluded with the statement that "nos droits sont ceux du peuple, et si on nous opprime, nous saurons opposer la résistance à l'oppression." The Moniteur noted tersely that this petition was sent to the Committee of General Security.[128] On October eighth Lacombe addressed the Jacobins and attempted to defend herself against the accusations against her. She was applauded for her efforts by the members.[129]

The same month was to witness the first paroxysm of the Terror, in which the Citoyennes Républicaines would succumb to the policy of the Committee of Public Safety to gather all power into its own hands. The "law of suspects" had been adopted on September 17, and on October 10, the Convention declared that the government "is revolutionary until the peace," which meant that the Constitution would be set aside and provisional rule would continue through the committees of the Convention. On October 13, the former queen, Marie Antoinette, was brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal, convicted, and guillotined on October 16.

On October 31 came the execution of the Girondin deputies whom the Citoyennes Républicaines had helped to proscribe the previous June. In early November came the trial and execution of two of the most famous of the female revolutionaries, Olympe de Gouges and Madame Roland. And scarcely a week earlier the Citoyennes Républicaines also had their demise.

The events leading to the dissolution of the Citoyennes Republicaines began on October 28, in another struggle between the citoyennes and market women from Les Halles. Invited by the section de Réunion to a ceremony in honour of Marat, some of the women of the Citoyennes Républicaines showed up wearing the red Phrygian cap. They were immediately attacked by the market women. The minutes of the Comité de Surveillance du Département de Paris recorded the "rixe" of the previous evening between the women of Les Halles and the "femmes révolutionnaires." The market women, according to this report, were protesting a plan of the revolutionary women to have it decreed that all women must wear "des bonnets rouges et des pantelons." The report of the Committee of General Security of the same day referred to the "troubles" that arose in the markets as a result of "des bonnets rouges que quelques femmes,se disant révolutionnaires Jacobines, affectent de porter en provoquant d'autres femmes à les porter aussi."[130]

The landslide which was to annihilate the women began in the Convention on the twenty-ninth when Fabre d'Eglantine opened the tirade against them. A deputation of women had appeared in the Convention complaining that the so-called revolutionary women were trying to force them to wear the Phrygian cap. In response to their demand to dress as they pleased, d'Eglantine stated that there had already been trouble about the cockade and the convention had decreed that the women wear it. He continued, "on demande aujourd'hui le bonnet rouge; on ne s'en tiendra pas là, on demandera bientôt la ceinture avec les pistolets." He claimed that enemies of the nation were responsible for arousing the women and encouraging them to arm themselves with weapons "<dont> elles ne savent pas se servir." As well, "des coalitions des femmes, sous le nom d'institutions revolutionnaires, fraternelles, etc." had been formed. The speaker declared, "j'ai fort bien observé que ces Sociétés ne sont point composées de mères de famille, de filles de famille, de soeurs occupées de leurs frères ou soeurs en bas-ages, mais d'espèces d'aventurières, de chavalières errantes, de filles émancipées, de grenadiers femelles." He then asked that the Convention decree that no person could force another to dress in a manner against that individual's wishes. As well, d'Eglantine requested that the Committee of General Security "fasse un rapport sur les sociétés de femmes." He was applauded and a decree to this effect was passed.[131] One of the women in the group returned to the bar with the following request: "Citoyens, nous demandons l'abolition de toutes les Sociétés de femmes formées en clubs, parceque c'est une femme que a fait le malheur de la France."[132]

Two days later in the Convention, Amar, deputy from the Isere, embarked on an astonishingly brutal and also fatal tirade against the Citoyennes Republicaines. In his report from the Committee of General Security, he described the altercation which had taken place at St.-Eustache on the twenty-eighth, where the women of the revolution, "soi-disant," had tried to force the others to wear "un pantelon et un bonnet rouge." He reported that the fighting became worse in the evening and "plusieurs des femmes soi-disant révolutionnaires furent maltraitées. On se livra envers quelques-unes à des voies de fait que la décence devrait proscrire." Undoubtedly some women had fallen victim to an excess of patriotism, said Amar, but others "n'ont été conduites que par la malveillance." And then Amar went in for the kill, asking two questions and giving voice to the most infamous anti-female indictment that was delivered at any time during the Revolution. First, would women be able to exercise political rights and participate in the affairs of government? "Les femmes sont-elles susceptibles de ces soins et des qualités qu'ils exigent? On peut répondre en général que non. Bien peu d'exemples démentiraient ce jugement."[133]

The political rights of the citizen, according to Amar, involve discussion and decisions relative to the interests of the

State. Would women have the "force morale et physique" that the exercise of these rights would require? "L'opinion universelle repousse cette idée." The second question posed by Amar was whether women should be allowed to hold political meetings. He described the purpose of political associations and concluded that women are not able to devote themselves to these questions "parce qu'elles seraient obligées d'y sacrifier des soins plus importants auxquels la nature les appelle." Amar believed that "les functions privées auxquelles sont destinées les femmes par la nature même tiennent a l'ordre général de la société" and this social order "résulte de la différence qu'il y a entre l'homme et la femme." Furthermore, each sex is called to a type of occupation which is appropriate to it. "Son action est circonscrite dans ce cercle qu'il ne peut franchir, car la nature, qui a posé ces limites à l'homme, commande impérieusement, et ne reçoit aucune loi."[134]

Next followed a quite amazing passage in which Amar praised the male for his greatness and superiority. "L'homme est fort, robuste, né avec une grande énergie, de l'audace et du courage; il brave les périls, l'intempérie des saisons par sa constitution; il résiste à tous les elements, il est propre aux arts, aux travaux pénibles; et comme il est presque exclusivement déstiné à l'agriculture, au commerce, à la navigation, aux voyages, à la guerre, à tout ce qui exige de la force, de l'intelligence, de la capacité." Moreover, "il paraît seul propre aux méditations profondes et sérieuses qui exigent une grande contention d'esprit et de longues études qu'il n'est pas donné à femmes de suivre!"[135]

Women, on the other hand, possessed a quite different set of qualities, according to Amar. Their purpose was to initiate the education of men, to prepare the spirits and the hearts of children for public virtue and "les diriger de bonne heure vers le bien, élever leur âme et les instruire dans le culte politique de la liberté." These, he said, are their functions, "après les soins du ménage!" Women are destined naturally "à faire aimer la vertu" and "quand elles auront rempli tous ces devoirs, elles auront bien mérité de la patrie." Undoubtedly a woman must be cognizant of the principles of liberty in order to pass them on to her children, but the matter of participation is quite a different thing. "L'honnêteté d'une femme permet qu'elle se montre en public, et qu'elle lutte avec les hommes? de discuter à la face d'un peuple sur des questions d'où depend le salut de la république?" Amar's response? "En général, les femmes sont peu capables de conceptions hautes et de méditations sérieuses" and if, in ancient times, women were kept within the family for their own good and out of deference to their "timidité naturelle," would citizens of the French republic wish to have women "à la tribune, aux assemblies politiques comme les hommes" while they abandon the source of all the virtues of their sex and the care of their families?[136]

Furthermore, Amar proclaimed, women could be of use through discussion with their husbands, using their influence to maintain their husbands' integrity. "Elles peuvent éclairer leurs epoux, leur communiquer des réflexions précieuses, fruit du calme d'une vie sédentaire." This is not all. The fortunate husband's love of country would be strengthened "par tout ce que l'amour prive leur donne d'empire." And best of all, "l'homme, éclairé par des discussions familières et paisibles au milieu de son ménage, rapportera dans la société les idées utiles que lui aura données une femme honnête." Amar then stated his belief that "une femme ne doit pas sortir de sa famille pour s'immiscer dans les affaires du gouvernement."[137]

There was also another way in which women's associations were dangerous, according to Amar. Because women lacked a moral education it was impossible for them to really understand the principles of liberty. "Leur presence dans les Sociétés populaires donnerait donc une part active dans le gouvernement à des personnes plus exposées à l'erreur et à la séduction." Women, he said, are disposed to "une exaltation qui serait funeste dans les affaires publiques" and the interests of the State "seraient sacrifiés à tout ce que la vivacité des passions peut produire d'égarement et de désordre." Furthermore, "livrées a la chaleur des débats publics, elles inculqueraient à leurs enfants, non l'amour de la patrie, mais les haines et les préventions." Amar concluded by saying that "il n'est pas possible que les femmes exercent les droits politiques." Therefore, "vous détruisez ces prétendues Sociétés populaires de femmes que l'aristocratie voudrait établir pour les mettre aux prises avec les hommes, diviser ceux-ci en les forçant de prendre un parti dans ces querelles, et exciter les troubles."[138]

Only the deputy from the Marne, Charlier, dared to protest. He said, "Malgré les inconvenients qu'on vient de citer, je ne sais sur quel principe on peut s'appuyer pour retirer aux femmes le droit de s'assembler paisiblement." He queried whether the fear of some abuse, in this case influence of the aristocracy, where there was no concrete evidence to support the fear, could warrant the destruction of the club itself. After all, "quelle est l'institution qui soit exempte d'inconvénients?" Representative Basire from the Cote d'Or responded by proposing a method of justifying the suspension of the societies. The Convention, he said, as the revolutionary government, was authorized to take any measures necessary for the public safety. "Il est donc uniquement question de savoir si les Sociétés de femmes sont dangereuses. L'expérience a prouvé, ces jours passés, combien elles sont funestes à la tranquillité publique; cela pose, qu'on ne me parle plus de principes." He concluded by requesting, in the interests of public safety, that the women's associations be outlawed, at least for the life of the revolution.[139]

The end of the women's clubs came immediately after this last contribution, when the National Convention on October 30 decreed: "Art 1er. Les clubs et les Sociétés populaires de femmes, sous quelque dénomination que ce soit, sont défendues."[140]

During November the women made two attempts at having the decree of the ninth Brumaire revoked. They appeared on November 5 at the bar of the Convention but were forced to leave "sous les huées et les moqueries."[141] Twelve days later a group of the Citoyennes, wearing the "bonnet rouge" went to a meeting of the General Council of the Commune. The reception there was equally unfriendly. The condemnation delivered by Chaumette echoed that of Amar on October 30. He stated that "il est affreux, il est contraire à toutes les lois de la nature qu'une femme se veuille faire homme....au nom de cette même nature, restez ce que vous êtes; et loin de nous envier les périls d'une vie orageuse, contentez-vous de nous les faire oublier au sein de nos familles, en reposant nos yeux sur le spectacle enchanteur de nos enfants heureux par vos soins."[142] A few weeks later, on November 20, having been accused of behaving in a disruptive fashion, women were also forbidden to attend sectional meetings.[143]

The voices of the revolutionary women were effectively stilled for many months. They would not really be audible again until the days of misery and starvation which characterized the spring of 1795, when women were pushed beyond the boundaries of human endurance and once again rose together in protest.

Chapter V

Three "Femmes Célèbres"

Among the women who were involved in revolutionary activities such as demonstrations, insurrections, and club organizations, there were, as we have seen, a number of outstanding individuals. Although all these women qualified as revolutionaries, each was a distinct individual with a unique personal history and with very specific motivations, attitudes, and interests which surfaced during the Revolution. The three women whom I have chosen are not particularly representative of any social class or political group, but each played an important role in her own right and in her own manner. The lives of Olympe de Gouges, Théroigne de Méricourt, and Manon Phlipon Roland, more conventionally known as Madame Roland, constitute an interesting study.

A. Olympe de Gouges

Olympe de Gouges has been called by a French historian "la grande révolutionnaire inconnue de notre histoire,"[1] but she is deserving of a place in history because of her advanced political ideas, her views on the position of women in society, and her general critique of societal attitudes and human institutions. It must be admitted that although her name is remembered, the extent of her ideas and activities has remained largely unexplored. Her role in the revolution was that of witness and commentator and her description of the political scene reflected her unique female perspective. As revolutionary scribe she dealt with many of the important themes and events of the period, using a variety of techniques in her written responses to the situations which arose. She was not politically consistent in her views but it seems that this inconsistency serves only to add to the rich texture of her work.

Olympe de Gouges was born Marie Gouze in May of 1748 in Montauban. Her mother was Anne-Olympe Mouisset and her father was Pierre Gouze, a butcher. In 1765 she married Louis-Yves Aubrey and in 1766 she bore a son, Pierre. After the death of her husband the same year, she left Montauban and with her baby went to live in

Paris. She was supposedly very beautiful as a young women and she was readily accepted into Parisian society. Apparently she had many lovers, several of them quite noteworthy figures such as the Duc d'Orléans, the Marquis de Chabrillant, and Biétrix de Rozières. De Rozières was said to be the father of her daughter, Julie, born in 1778.[2]

In the years preceding the revolution, Marie Gouze changed her name and began to write.[3] Themes of social injustice captivated her imagination and she was somewhat obsessed with what she regarded as her personal tragedy. She believed that her natural father had been a count, Le Franc de Pompignon, and although there was little evidence for such a claim, she spent her life embittered at the idea that she was the daughter of a count but had been raised by a butcher in Montauban.[4] In her eloquent description of her plight Olympe lamented that "il est affreux de se plaindre de ceux qu'on aime, qu'on chérit et qu'on respecte." She would prefer "pouvoir étouffer dans mon âme un ressentiment, hélas! trop légitime; mais l'excès de la cruauté, du fanatisme et de l'hypocrisie l'emporte." She condemned a society which punished illegitimacy so cruelly, but to her credit it must be said that this personal obsession did not hinder her concern for more important issues.[5]

Her works from the period of the revolution were mainly religious and political in nature and many were written in response to specific events. They trace the path of her changing political loyalties. In July 1789 she was an ardent revolutionary supporting the attack on the Bastille and cheering the people's victory. In October she expressed sympathy for the monarchy and condemned the perpetraters of the king's embarrassment and return to Paris. In June of 1791 she was a staunch republican, but at the time of the king's trial, in December, 1792, she offered to defend him.

Olympe's enthusiastic response to the revolution resulted from her belief that society was corrupt and that women particularly were the victims of oppression and injustice. Her hope for humankind lay with revolutionary reform. In 1789 she clarified her view of women's place in the world order. "Les hommes ont tous les avantages. On en a vus qui, sortis de la plus basse origine, sont parvenus à la plus grande fortune et quelquefois aux dignités. Et les femmes sans industrie--c'est-à-dire si elles sont vertueuses--restent dans la misère. On nous a exclues de tout pouvoir, de tout savoir. On ne s'est pas avisé de nous ôter celui d'écrire! Cela est fort heureux."[6] An important pre-revolutionary work was her first truly political tract, "La lettre au peuple ou projet d'une Caisse patriotique", written in November, 1788. This was followed in December of the same year by "Remarques Patriotiques". Her vision of a better society was developed in these two works which served to outline a program of vast social reform and which was extremely avante-garde in its orientation. Some of her ideas were to be implemented much later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She advocated social assistance, senior citizens' homes, daycares, and "ateliers publics" or "national workshops" to keep people from unemployment. She also proposed the creation of "tribunaux populaires" to judge criminal matters and outlined in some detail a plan for a tax on luxury items. She also proposed voluntary donations to the government to help reduce the country's deficit. In *Projet d'un second théâtre et d'une maternité*, written in 1789, she criticized the filthy conditions endured in the maternity sections of hospitals and advocated "une Maison simple dont la propreté sera tout le luxe." She protested the fate of women "qui expirent entre les bras de leurs accoucheurs en donnant la vie à des hommes dont aucun ne s'est occupé sérieusement, ou n'a eu le plus petit intérêt pour les tourments qu'il a causés." She insisted that "ce ne sont point des appartements somptueux, des lambris dorés que les femmes bien élevées attendent de la générosité de la Nation." A place of simplicity and cleanliness would be the objective.[7]

Olympe was also much concerned with the idea of slavery and the plight of blacks. Her prerevolutionary writing included a treatise of February 1788 entitled *Réflexions sur les hommes nègres*. She was one of the first to speak out against the treatment of blacks in French society and she vividly expressed hatred for the Club des Colons and was suspicious of the Comédiens-Français for their attitudes toward blacks. She recalled that as a child she had seen blacks regarded as brutes and treated as mistakes of nature. As she grew older, however, she realized "que c'était la force et le préjugé qui les avaient condamnés à cet horrible esclavage, que la Nature n'y avait aucune part, et que l'injuste et puissant intérêt des Blancs avait tout fait". She condemned the actions of the Europeans, "avides de sang et de ce métal que la cupidité a nommé de l'or." The result of this greed had been that "le père a méconnu son enfant, le fils a sacrifié son père, les frères se sont combattus, et les vaincus ont été vendus comme des boeufs au marché."[8] In the end "un commerce d'hommes" had been established. Although claiming that she had little knowledge of politics, she was still able to understand that "une liberté générale rendait les hommes Nègres aussi essentiels que les Blancs." She believed that liberty would make the blacks "plus sages et plus humains" and they would become the "cultivateurs libres de leurs contrées."[9]

In 1789 Olympe's response to the convocation of the Estates General was to write Le Cri du Sage. She opened with a call to action. "Il est temps d'élever la voix; le bon sens, la sagesse ne sauraient plus observer le silence; il est temps de dire définitivement à la Nation, que si elle ne se décide pas promptement à ne faire qu'un travail, elle entraîne sous peu la chute du Royaume, qu'elle ôtera à jamais la confiance, et que le mal deviendra incurable." She stated that the ancient French sinned through ignorance, the moderns through an excess of knowledge. "A force d'idées et de lumières, <les Françaises> se trouvent aujourd'hui dans une confusion épouvantable."[10] She observed that the discord among the French would serve "non seulement jeter le feu dans les quatre coins de la France, mais soulever nos ennemis, les encourager contre nous." She added, "Depuis longtemps j'observe les hommes; j'ai été forcée de reconnaître que la plupart ont le coeur flétri, l'âme abjecte, l'esprit énervé et le génie malfaiteur." She addressed women as traitors to their roles as females. "O Femmes! Qu'avez-vous fait? Qu'avez-vous produit? Avez-vous pu croire qu'en vous jetant à la tête des hommes, vous conserverez votre empire? Il est détruit, et vos grâces naturelles ont disparu avec cette noble pudeur qui rendait jadis les femmes si touchantes et si chères à leurs yeux." She accused women of having abandonned control of their households and of having distanced their infants from the maternal breast: "livres dans les bras de serviteurs corrumpus, ils ont appris à vous haïr, à vous mépriser."[11] She also complained that women were at the same time feeble and all-powerful, the betrayed and the betrayer. She said, "Les hommes se sont instruits par vous-mêmes, de vos travers, de vos détours, de vos ruses, de vos inconséquences;et ils sont enfin à leur tour devenus femmes."

Further, she asked if one is able without pity to see "la suffisance de nos jeunes gens, la légèreté de nos veillards sur des objets majeurs, et l'extravagance des hommes d'un âge raisonnable, sans se récrier contre le siècle et contre les moeurs?"[12]

Olympe expressed her views regarding the problems confronting the Estates General. She expressed the belief that if virtue and patriotism did exist they should already be making themselves felt there, and if this were indeed the case, "les trois Ordres ensemble ne pourraient dans cette réunion qu'opiner pour le bien public." But on the other hand, she reasoned, "si l'esprit de parti vient à l'emporter dans cette Assemblée sur la bienséance, la raison et la justice, ces Etats-généraux qu'on a désirés depuis si longtemps, ne seront donc réunis que pour semer la discorde." She asked of the delegates, "Qui peut ramener le calme si ce n'est l'harmonie dans vos Assemblées?" She stressed that cooperation between the three orders would be necessary for any useful gains to occur. "Pour vous accorder, il faut fronder vos prétentions particulières, convaincre le Tiers-Etat qu'il n'a pas le droit lui seul de créer de nouvelles lois, et représenter au Clergé qu'il doit se dépouiller dans ce moment du faste de ses dignités et de la majeure partie de ses prérogatives." As for the nobility, it had to be persuaded "que c'est une unjustice, une vexation criante, de refuser de sièger avec le Tiers-Etat, comme s'il y avait entre ces deux Ordres des barrières invincibles." On the subject of the discord between the Orders, she commented that not a day went by when an impoverished noble did not ask for the hand of a young woman of the Third Estate. Furthermore, according to Olympe, there was not a young woman of "illustrious blood" who had not mixed that blood with some from the Third Estate. Yet, she complained, in this moment of distress, "dans un temps de calamité, vous craignez, Messieurs, de mêler vos idées avec celles des hommes qui vous valent peut-être." She exhorted the nobility to let honor speak to them and to let the welfare of France be their guide. She felt that the rights given them by rank, once renounced, would make them superior in modesty. These same rights, she thought, which might be sacred in any other circumstance, "sont injustes et déplacés dans cette révolution." She said that whichever order gives up its prejudices for the good of the Nation, whether it be the nobility or the Third Estate, "sera toujours le parti patriotique à qui la France devra son salut."[13] She questioned the importance of the whole debate on vote by head or by order which was consuming the Estates General. "Qu'importe au roi, qu'importe au citoyen affligé, qu'importe au peuple malheureux, qu'on délibère par tête ou par ordre."[14]

Olympe stated that she had several objectives for her writing and that all of them were "bien louables." In stating her aspirations she said,"Je voudrais que le roi de France remontât

sur son trône; que la nation reconnût qu'il en est descendu pour le malheur de la France; que les Français, quittant le sabre et la giberne, se reunissent à la tète de leurs affaires; que les districts ne fussent conposés que de vieux pères de famille, de ces respectables patriarches qui ne sont plus propres qu'à donner de sages avis à leurs enfants; que la garde nationale non soldée ne fut sous les armes que dans des circonstances véritablement orageuses pour la tranquillite publique, comme dans celle-ci, où l'effervescence du peuple semblait vouloir se joindre à la discussion de l'Assemblée nationale."[15]

Olympe returned to the topic of slavery, saying that she would encourage the slavers to treat their slaves more gently and with generosity, but, she stated, this would be difficult to achieve since these people did not wish to lose even the smallest part of their revenue and that greed formed the basis "de leurs craintes, de leur rage et de leur barbarie."[16] The church did not escape criticism. Had it offered at the beginning the 400 millions as a "don gratuit" that it was now offering, said Olympe, its property would still be sacred. She added that if the king had followed her advice, he would not be where he now was.[17]

In Départ de M. Necker et de Madame de Gouges (1790), Olympe stated that she wished to conserve the spirit of French principles, "déraciner seulement les abus et consolider la monarchie francaise pour le bonheur de tous mes concitoyens." She also expressed her horror at the violence of the October Days in which the "infames brigands qui ont assailli et repoussé les gardes du corps, enfoncé les portès du palais de nos rois, égorgé sans pitié des sentinelles qui devaient mourir dans leur poste, violé l'appartement du souverain et poursuivi la reine jusque dans son lit."[18]

In the spring of 1791 Olympe was a self-declared constitutional monarchist, describing herself as "royaliste modérée et patriote" in an article published on March 10 in the Thermomètre du Jour. She warned of the dangers of despotism in the face of international crisis. "Je déclare donc qu'au moment où la Patrie est en danger, si le despostisme avait le dessus, adieu la liberté des citoyens et les droits de l'homme."[19] On the twenty-second of the same month she sent the National Assembly a piece entitled L'Esprit Français, ou Problème à résoudre sur le labyrinthe de divers complots and dedicated it to the king. She predicted that the effects of the revolution would be permanent and universal. "Jamais cause ne fut plus belle que celle qui va se décider. C'est la cause des peuples." She deplored the fact the the Constitution was not practically applied on a daily basis. As well she criticized the corruption of the ministers and the disorder of the administration, complained of the continuing violence and finally deplored the Assembly's lack of recognition of women, the eternal losers in the history of revolutions. She lamented, "O mon pauvre sexe, ô femmes qui n'avez rien acquis dans cette Révolution."[20] Historian Léopold Lacour has commented, and rightly so, that she was not just claiming rights for women. She was claiming all rights for all women.[21]

Olympe deplored the divorce between the monarchy and constitutional principles. In Mirabeau aux Champs Elysées, a play written in April of 1791, she reproached those who wished to uproot "avec trop de violence l'arbre de la monarchie." She claimed that the disturbance and upheaval would be too much and all control would be lost. "Les abeilles se dispersent et l'essaim ne produit plus; heureux si sa furie ne se retourne pas contre vous et s'ils ne vous font pas sentir bientôt ses mortels aiguillons."[22]

The flight of the king to Varennes in June of 1791 resulted in a pamphlet entitled Sera-t-il roi? ne le sera-t-il pas?. Olympe discussed the consequences of the king's action and examined the possibilities for alternate forms of government. Would the people want a republican form of government or would it be more acceptable to put the king back on the throne or perhaps to name a regent? Olympe proposed yet another alternative. "Vous avez appris que le pouvoir d'un roi n'est rien quand il n'est pas émané de la force supérieure et soutenu de la confiance du peuple...; Il faut vous soumettre à cette loi plus forte que de vains préjugés, il faut changer l'esprit de votre cour, faire une réforme totale de votre Maison, de même que celle de la reine, de madame Royale, de madame Elisabeth, et de régénérer entièrement, comme la Constitution, cette cour gangrenée." She advocated that the king replace the aristocrats at court with "les citoyens et citoyennes connus de même par leur patriotisme,"[23] and she suggested that after the royal family returned to the Tuileries the next step should be to get rid of all the aspiring princesses, duchesses and marquises from the palace "pour substituer à cette classe de femmes esclaves de leurs préjugés des citoyennes actives et zélées pour le bien de la patrie."[24] She then attacked the Duc d'Orléans and the crowd at the Palais Royal for the slander which was generated there against the deputies of the National Assembly. She accused those who frequented the Palais of having been corrupted by the court. As for the Palais itself, she expressed the hope that the people of Paris would "<le> mettre en cendres."[25] It was also her suggestion that an army of women be constituted to reside in the Tuileries for the purpose of subjecting Marie Antoinette to a program of thought reform.[26]

In September of 1791 Olympe produced the work for which she is best remembered. It was entitled Déclaration des Droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne, dédié à la Reine. In the opening lines of the preface she informed the queen that she had not waited for liberty to reign before she expressed her opinions. She said, "Je me suis montrée avec la même énergie dans un temps où l'aveuglement des Despotes punissait une si noble audace." She explained to the queen that she had always defended her, even when all others spoke against her. Olympe thought it important that the queen take the part of women. "Cette révolution ne s'opérera que quand toutes les femmes seront pénétrées de leur déplorable sort, et des droits qu'elles ont perdus dans la société. Soutenez Madame, une si belle cause." Life, she said, is not worth much, especially for a queen, when "cette vie n'est pas embellie par l'amour des peuples, et par les charmes éternels de la bienfaisance."[27]

In the body of the Déclaration Olympe first appealed to men to be just and she stated her objective clearly. She wished to set before all members of society a declaration of the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of women in a way that would constantly remind them of their rights and obligations. She wished that the authoritative acts of women and of men "pouvant être à chaque instant comparés avec le but de toute institution politique, en soient plus respectés" and that "les réclamations des citoyennes, fondées désormais sur des principes simples et incontestables, tournent toujours au maintien de la constitution, des bonnes moeurs, et au bonheur de tous."[28]

In Article I Olympe paraphrased the first article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, saying that women are born free and equal to men in their rights. She claimed for each individual "des droits naturels et imprescriptibles," these being the rights of liberty, property, security, and, especially, resistance to oppression" (Article II). Authority can come only from a true national sovereignty, that is to say, from the union of men and women (Article III). The exercise of the natural rights of women have been limited by man's perpetual tyranny; these limits must be reformed "par les lois de la nature et de la raison," which, in their wisdom, proscribe all acts harmful to society (Article IV). The next four articles deal with the general will and equality of opportunity according to capability, the equality of women before the law, the application of established law to women in a just manner, and punishment to the letter of the law if a woman is found to be guilty. The next article, number X, is the one that has inspired the most comment: "Nul ne doit être inquiété pour ses opinions mêmes fondamentales; la femme a le droit de monter sur l'échafaud; elle doit avoir également celui de monter à la Tribune, pourvu que ses manifestations ne troublent pas l'ordre public établi par la Loi." Historians have observed that Olympe was accorded only the first of these rights. Article XI states that women should be accorded the right of free communication and Article XII says that her rights must be used and interpreted for the greatest benefit to all. Women must contribute equally with men "pour l'entretien de la force publique." She must share the unpleasant tasks, and she must have the same share in the distribution "des places, des emplois, des charges, des dignités, et de l'industrie" (Article XIII).Articles XIV and XV deal with fairness and equality in taxation. Article XVI states that a country does not have a constitution without the guarantee of rights and the separation of powers and "La constitution est nulle, si la majorité des individus qui composent la Nation, n'a pas coopéré à sa rédaction." The last article, number XVII, deals with property and states that it belongs to both sexes, whether united or separate, and that it is for each sacred and inviolable. As in the original Declaration, this article concludes with the statement that no one can be deprived of property except when the public need, legally determined, dictates it and then only "sous la condition d'une juste et préalable indemnité."[29]

Throughout the period of the Legislative Assembly Olympe grew increasingly suspicious of the Jacobins and their motives and activities. Her thoughts on this topic were expressed in Grande Eclipse du soleil jacobiniste et de la lune feuillantine (May 1792). She referred to their club as "un repaire de scélérats" and "une caverne de brigands" and produced a metaphor to describe the situation. "Le soleil jacobiniste veut éclipser la lune feuillantine qui marche, d'un pas lent, à travers les ténèbres et les voies tortueuses de nuages; mais la terre, au moment d'être engloutie par ces deux astres malfaisons, se soulèvera contre eux, échappera à leur sinistre influence, et les plongera dans le néant."[30]

On June 18, 1792, Olympe wrote a letter to Petion, mayor of Paris, expressing her disapproval of the imminent insurrection. "On nous menace pour lundy de la descente dy faubourg Saint-Antoine aux Thuileries: cette démarche est audacieuse, inconstitutionelle." She stated that she liked neither the king of the Tuileries nor the one of the Faubourg St. Antoine. She explained that in her opinion both "conspirent sans relâche au renversement de la Constitution." The king residing at the Tuileries was the constitutional king and "il faut savoir le respecter même avec ses vices."[31] In La Fierté de l'innocence, written in September 1792 after the bloody September Massacres, she expressed her belief, quite different to that expressed earlier, that there could no longer be a reconciliation between monarchical principles and the new republican sentiments. She believed that since the revolution began the country had maintained a degraded royalty. "L'Assemblée avilissait les tyrans et les conservait" and the result had been "un gouvernement monstrueux."[32] In the same pamphlet she described how her thinking changed and she became a republican. She did not say at exactly which moment this took place but emphasized that illumination struck suddenly. "Je suis restée long-temps dans une telle confusion d'idées, qu'il me fut impossible de prononcer mon opinion." But then she described how "les ténèbres s'éclaircirent, le jour vient, je sentis que j'étais et que je mourrais libre." After this moment of near mystical revelation, she had lived her life as a republican.[33]

Olympe's Adresse au Don Quichotte du Nord was written in September/October 1792. This was her direct response to the events of August 10. This address was in the form of a letter to King Frederick William II of Prussia in which she chastised him for his invasion of France. "J'avais cru que l'héritier du Salomon du Nord, de l'homme lettré, de l'ami des arts, n'aurait jamais songé à s'opposer à ce qu'un peuple, maître de ses droits, voulut se régénérer, et sécouer le joug du despotisme, pour entrer sous le règne de la liberté." She described herself to the Prussian king as "un de ces êtres courbés depuis des siècles sous le joug des préjugés masculins...je suis femme."[34] She questioned the purpose of his interference. "Est-ce pour aggraver les misères incalculables des peuples, et pour affermir la dépravation des coeurs que, t'éloignant de ton royaume, tu es venu relever un trône écroulé sous les ruines des forfaits?" And gave him advice: "Frédéric, si tu es sage, tu évacueras promptement notre territoire; mais si, nouveau don Quichotte, tu t'obstines à combattre des géans réels, je crains pour toi qu'il ne te reste pas même un moulin à vent pour retraite....Rappelle ta raison,ne crois plus à des rêveries mensongères. Retire-toi prudemment. Je te souhaite un bon voyage." In the same letter she stated that "Cette saine insurrection du 10 août a coupé le noeud gordien tenait dans l'indécision tous les bons citoyens."[35] This epistle marked the end of her support for the monarchy.

Attitudes toward Olympe as expressed in the press during the summer and autumn of 1792 were not complimentary. After her participation in a procession on July 14, accompanied, among others, by Théroigne de Méricourt and Etta Palm d'Aelders, the royalist *Tableau de Paris* described them as "un choeur de vierges nationales aussi extravagantes que ridicules." The *Révolutions de Paris* commented that Olympe had not missed the opportunity to take her place in the procession at the head of a group of women. She was accused of conceit and of projecting an image that seemed to say, "Regardez-moi bien, c'est pourtant moi qui m'offris comme médiatrice à nos députés; c'est moi qui, la première, leur présentai le rameau d'olivier. Puisse-t-il prendre racine et fleurir au milieu d'eux!"[36]

During the autumn of 1792 Olympe expressed openly and emphatically her dislike for many of the Jacobin leaders. Marat she regarded as "destructeur des lois, ennemi mortel de l'ordre, de l'humanité, de sa patrie." She accused him of living at liberty in the society in which he was a tyrant and a plague.[37] On

November 5, Olympe posted public notices around Paris which were entitled *Pronostic sur Maximilien Robespierre, par un animal amphibie* and she signed them with the anagram "Polyme." Addressing Robespierre she said, "tu te dis l'unique auteur de la Révolution, tu n'en fus, tu n'en es, tu n'en seras éternellement que l'opprobe et l'exécration." She depicted him as essentially evil, befouling the very air that he breathed, and added that the blinking of his eyelids expressed "toute la turpitude de <son> âme et chacun de <ses> cheveux porte un crime." She advised, "fuis le grand jour,il n'est pas fait pour toi" and continued, "Que veux-tu? Que prétends-tu? De qui veux-tu te venger? A qui veux-tu faire la guerre et de quel sang as-tu soif encore? De celui du peuple?" She accused him of wishing to assassinate the king to avoid legal judgement. And she made a chilling prediction, which expressed her sympathy with the Girondins in their accelerating conflict with the Mountain in the Assembly. "Tu voudrais assassiner Pétion, Roland, Vergniaud, Condorcet, Louvet, Brissot, Lasource, Guadet, Gensonné, Hérault de Séchelles, en un mot, tous les flambeaux de la République et du patriotism."[38] Of this group only Louvet was to survive the Terror.

In another attack she suggested that she and Robespierre drown themselves together in the Seine. "Tu donnerais, dis-tu, ta vie pour concourir à la gloire et au bonheur de notre commune patrie." If that were the case, she challenged him to imitate her actions. "Précipitons-nous dans la Seine. Ta mort calmera les esprits et le sacrifice d'une vie pure désarmera le ciel." She was, she thought, of use to her country, "mais ton trépas le délivrera du plus grand des fléaux" and perhaps, she added, "ne l'aurai-je jamais mieux servi."[39] These comments did not go unnoticed and in October members of the Jacobin Club discussed an article in the Courrier du Midi about the plight of the imprisoned king and the sympathy that the public held for him. One of the members, Bourdon de l'Oise, asked if anyone knew who was responsible for the ideas being spread throughout Paris. He then gave the answer to his question. "C'est la de Gouges, cette Olympe de Gouges que vous avez vu placarder dans toutes les rues de Paris avant la fin de l'Assemblée Législative."[40] Bourdon continued, "on a fait une pétition à Fontainebleau. Eh bien! c'est cette coquine qui est chargée de la colporter."[41] Bourdon also accused her of being a bastard of Louis XV. Olympe denied it all emphatically in her Compte morale, which followed immediately. As well she made derogatory comments about the lack of participation of certain Jacobins at the beginning of the Revolution. "Qu'étiez-vous, alors, Marat, Robespierre, Bourdin? Des insectes croupissant dans le bourbier de la corruption d'où vous n'êtes pas encore sortis!"[42] In Mon dernier mot à mes chers amis (Dec. 1792), she continued her attack, saying "adieu, Bourdon, Marat, tous les maringouins possibles;...<vous> bouleversez la France à votre aise, dilapidez ses finances, excitez le meurtre et le pillage; distribuez-vous les places, substituez aux vertus et aux talens les vices, l'insolence et la nullité."[43] In a letter written to Robespierre on November 5, 1792 she accused him of making a name for himself among the most celebrated of usurpers. "Cromwell caresse ta raison, et Mahomet la subjugue....tu proclames la paix à tout le monde, et tu fais la guerre au genre humain!"[44]

Shortly before this Olympe wrote a play entitled La France sauvée ou le tyran détrôné which satirized the shortcomings of the aristocracy. The Princess Lamballe received lessons in good manners and the queen was the recipient of lessons in rudimentary political truths. The queen's reaction to this display of audacity is mixed while her ladies-in-waiting register total shock.[45] Its content was later used against Olympe at the time of her trial.

On December 15, 1792 Olympe wrote a letter to the Convention in which she asked that the king's life be spared. She wrote, "je m'offre après le courageux Malesherbes pour être le défenseur de Louis" and she went on to state that she believed Louis to be "fautif comme roi" but with his title of king removed, "il cesse d'être coupable aux yeux de la République." She said his punishment would be for all the mistakes of his ancestors. "Il fut faible, il fut trompé, il nous a trompés, il s'est trompé lui-même." Those were his crimes. She questioned whether he was more guilty or dangerous to the nation than his brothers or son and she concluded, "Il ne suffit pas de faire tomber la tête d'un roi pour le tuer, il vit encore longtemps après sa mort. Mais il est mort véritablement quand il survit a sa chute."[46] One of the deputies purportedly offered twenty-four sous for her head to which she responded that it was worth at least thirty, and being thus both witty and quick-witted, she escaped severe punishment, at least for a time. Les Révolutions de Paris responded to the incident by saying that Olympe would do better to knit pantalons for the sans-culottes and challenged its readership to imagine the results if there were two hundred more like her seated in the Convention next to the Abbé Fauchet.[47] Later, in Avis pressant à la Convention, par une vraie Républicaine, she said, "j'opine qu'aucun vrai républicain ne votera pour sa mort....Le plus grand crime de Louis Capet fut...de naître dans un temps où la philosophie préparait en silence les fondements de la République."[48]

On January 16, 1793 the Convention voted the death of the king. Olympe responded with a poster which she distributed around Paris. It was entitled Arrêt de mort que présente Olympe de Gouges contre Louis Capet. She stated, "Je crois que depuis que Louis a encouru la peine de mort comme roi, le glaive de la Loi ne peut plus l'atteindre comme homme. Cette tête coupable, une fois tombée, elle ne nous est plus d'aucune utilité. Cette tête nous a coûté trop cher pour ne pas en tirer un réel avantage." She went on to suggest that the royal family be brought to the battlefields and be positioned "au milieu de nos armées entre le fer de nos ennemis et notre artillerie." Then, if the "brigands couronnés" persisted in their crimes aagainst the French republic, Olympe would herself have "l'honneur d'allumer la première la mèche du canon qui nous délivrera de cette famille homicide et tyrannique."[49] This suggestion, like so many of her others, was ignored.

Two days after the execution of the king on January 21, Olympe's play *L'Entrée du Dumouriez à Bruxelles* opened at the Théâtre de la République (Comédie Française). The play depicted the French in their role as liberators of other European nations and the author wished to show that the French destroyed tyrants but not their subjects. One of her characters delivered the argument to the vanquished that "les Français sont vos amis, ils ne veulent que détruire les tyrans pour délivrer les nations; ils ont commencé par la leur; imitez-les; les soldats sont tous frères et doivent se réunir pour la cause universelle des peuples."[50] The play was not well received although the content was revolutionary. Perhaps Olympe's recent intervention on the side of the king rendered the populace less than responsive. On opening night spectators demanded the author, who was chased from the theatre with members of the audience in close pursuit. Not one to let such an event go without comment, Olympe responded in the days which followed with yet another poster and defended her position. In *Complots dévoilés* she said, "les misérables me reprochent mon incivisme parce que je me suis proposée pour défendre Louis XVI. Parce que j'ai pensé que sa mort était inutile et pourrait devenir funeste à la République."[51]

When she wrote *Avis pressant à la Convention, par une vraie Républicaine* in April 1793, she proceeded to post it around Paris, as was her usual custom. In it she condemned the growing dissension among the factions in the Convention. "Voyez cette masse généreuse de la plus brillante jeunesse voler sur nos frontières pour y répandre un sang pur et sans tache. Et pour qui, grand Dieu! Pour la Patrie seule et non pour assouvir vos passions et pour remettre un tyran sur le trône.... Les aristocrates s'applaudissent de vos divisions. J'ai entendu de mes propres oreilles dans un corridor de spectacle: 'Nos affaires vont bien, les coquins de la Convention nationale ne s'entendent plus, notre triomphe est certain.'"[52]

On June 4, 1793, Olympe wrote her *Testament Politique* and addressed it to the Jacobins, the Commune and the forty-eight sections of Paris. In it she deplored the actions of the preceding days when the Girondins were expelled from the Convention. She wrote, "O Providence! je t'invoque, les hommes ne sont plus en etat de m'entendre! accelère le terme de mes jours! mes yeux fatigués du dolourеux spectacle de leurs dissensions, de leurs trames criminelles, n'en peuvent plus soutenir l'horreur." She asked, "hommes égarés par des passions délirantes, qu'avez-vous fait? quels maux n'avez-vous pas amassés sur la France!" She accused the Jacobins of thinking France could be saved merely by this "grande proscription." To the Girondins, whom she called the "nobles victimes du 31 mai," she said that "c'est dans la même mort qui vous attend que je trouverai la récompense de mon courage et de mes vertus."[53]

She went further and offered a defense of the Girondins. She had never once suspected the Girondins, now covered in "une affreuse proscription," to be "complices des tyrans couronnés." These men "périraient les premiers sur l'échafaud si ces tyrans l'emportaient sur nos efforts républicains." She said of the Girondins, "ils ont du talent, des vertus, et du caractère; voilà leurs crimes. Ce sont 'les sages de la République.'"[54]

When the contents of Olympe's writings are considered, it is a wonder that she survived as long as she did. Her trespasses against those in power had been many. From the time that she wrote Réponse à la justification de Maximilien Robespierre she knew that her days were numbered. In the dedication of her works to Philippe Egalite in the autumn of 1793 she wrote, "mes jours sont menacés; je m'adresse à toi pour les protéger, et cependant je ne crains pas la mort, tu le sais; mais je veux mourir glorieusement; et, si je le puis, je servirai encore ma patrie dans mes derniers momens."[55] But it had been the posting of Les Trois Urnes, ou la salut de la patrie, par un voyageur aérien in July of 1793 that had supplied the final provocation. The idea behind it was freedom of choice. The people should choose the form that the government would take. "Trois urnes seront placées sur la table du président de l'Assemblée (de chaque département), portant chacune d'elles cette inscription: 'Gouvernement Républicain,' 'Gouvernement Fédéral,' 'Gouvernement Monarchique.' Le president proclamera au nom de la Patrie en danger le choix libre et individuel de l'un de ces trois gouvernements." The French people would be the masters of their fate and they would decide by secret ballot which of the alternatives would be to them "le plus conforme à leur caractère, à leurs moeurs, à leur climat.... La majorité doit l'emporter."[56] At this time Olympe was making preparations to move to Tours, but had returned to Paris to put her affairs in order. After completing her poster, Les Trois Urnes, she had made arrangements in her usual way with a "placarder" to have her message distributed around Paris. She was arrested as she returned home that morning, July 20, on the Rue de la Barillerie close to the Palais de Justice. She was taken to the Mairie and held there for five days. On July 25 she was moved to l'Abbaye prison where she stayed until August 21 at which time she was moved to the Petite-Force; on October 15 she went to the convalescent home of

Dr. Lescourbiac. From there she was moved on October 20 to the Conciergerie, already known as "l'anti-chambre de la mort." Throughout this period of imprisonment she continued to write and as always left a detailed record of her thoughts and experiences.

In August she wrote *Défense d'Olympe de Gouges face au Tribunal Révolutionnaire*. In it she lamented the suffering she had endured since her arrest and also complained of the violation of the Constitution. "A l'article 7 de la Constitution, la liberté des opinions et de la presse n'est-elle pas consacrée comme le plus précieux patrimoine de l'homme? Ces droits, ce patrimoine, la Constitution même, ne seraient-ils que des phrases vagues, et ne présenteraient-ils que des sens illusoires?" She then described her own sad experience. She said that for a month she had been in irons. "J'étais déjà jugée avant d'être envoyée au tribunal révolutionnaire par le sanhédrin de Robespierre, qui avait décidé que dans huit jours je serais guillotinée." She added, "mon innocence, mon énergie, et l'atrocité de ma détention ont fait faire sans doute à ce conciliabule de sang, de nouvelles réflexions." She complained that Robespierre wished to pass her off as insane and she retorted that sane or reasonable, the welfare of her country was her first concern. She said that she would continue to follow him to his "caverne infernale, où les furies vomissent à grands flots le poison de la discorde, que tes énergumènes vont semer dans toute la République et produire la dissolution entière de la France si les vrais Républicains ne se rallient pas autour de la statue de la Liberté."[57] She described her suffering since her arrest, the lack of sanitation, medical attention and privacy. Describing how she was incarcerated in a tiny cell containing only a bed, she complained that to add to her discomfort a guard was constantly with her. "<Il> ne me quittait pas d'une minute jour et nuit, indécence dont la Bastille et les cachots de l'Inquisition n'offrent point d'exemple."[58]

Olympe had fallen and hurt her leg the evening before her arrest. She reported that this injury, unattended, caused her much pain and fever during her imprisonment. "La fièvre que j'avais toutes les nuits, un amas qui se formait dans ma jambe, toute appelait vers moi, quand j'aurais été criminelle, les secours bienfaisants de la sainte humanité." She lamented that she was unable to recall such treatment without shedding tears and felt that the people would find it difficult to believe "que des hommes, des magistrats soi-disant populaires, aient poussé la férocité jusqu'à me refuser pendant sept jours de faire appeler un médecin et de me faire apporter du linge. Vingt fois la même chemise que j'avais trempée de mes sueurs se reséchа sur mon corps."[59]

Olympe's writing during this season of terror shows that the she was aware that her chances of survival were slim. On September 22 she wrote a letter from the Petite-Force which she addressed to the 48 sections. In it she gave her collected writings to the citizens of Paris, saying, "Citoyens...vous connaissez tous mon amour pour la patrie et pour la liberté. Acceptez l'édition entière de mes oeuvres." She requested that all citizens "puissent éternellement rendre compte de cet amour pour la liberté dont j'ai électrisé la première votre sexe et le mien." She requested that as recompense for all her works of patriotism these citizens send "une députation à la barre du sénat pour réclamer justice d'un semblable traitement, et le maintien des lois."[60]. One of the police inspectors, Latour-Lamontagne, commented in his report on September 21 that "tous les murs de Paris sont couverts d'une affiche de la citoyenne Olympe de Gouges qui se plaint de sa longue détention, rappelle les services qu'elle a rendus à la Patrie, annonce la préparation d'un nouveau massacre dans les prisons et se regarde comme une victime qu'on va immoler. La placard ne produit aucune sensation: on s'arrête un instant et l'on se retire en disant : Ah! c'est Olympe de Gouges."[61]

Throughout the time of her imprisonment Olympe was also writing letters soliciting freedom from various people in authority, such as Danton and Fouquier-Tinville.[62] The response was minimal. She was interrogated on August 6 while at the Abbaye prison by members of the Revolutionary Tribunal who were interested mainly in the content of Les Trois Urnes and what they interpreted to be a call for a type of government other than the "République une et indivisible."[63] She was returned to her cell to await her fate. Finally after three more months of imprisonment, with the Terror at its height, Olympe was called before the Revolutionary Tribunal on November 2, 1793. The queen and twenty-one Girondins were among those who had been executed the previous month. Olympe was taken from her cell in the Conciergerie at about 7 a.m. and led to the "salle de l'Egalité" where her trial commenced, under the direction of Naulin, substitute for the public prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville. The charges against Olympe were read and were lengthy in number and duration. She was accused, among other things, of attempting to restore the tyrant that the people itself had deposed, of having claimed in one of her works that the monarchy was the best form of government for the "esprit français," and of provoking civil war. Further, it was said that she had attempted to undermine the constituted authorities, slander the friends and defenders of the people and of liberty, and cause trouble between the people and their representatives.[64] To her surprise she was left with no one to defend her and she was told that she was capable of carrying out her own defense. Les Trois Urnes had particularly offended the authorities, especially the phrase, "Louis Capet est mort; mais Louis Capet règne encore parmi vous," because it expressed the idea that the French people had "la République à la bouche, et la royalisme dans le coeur."[65] Also Olympe's suggestion that there be a choice between three types of government was interpreted as being particularly threatening. Olympe steadfastly insisted throughout her trial that all her concern and all her efforts had been for the good of her country. In the end she announced, in one last desperate and melodramatic act, that her enemies would not have the pleasure of seeing her blood flow because she was pregnant. This caused laughter in the audience.

These events were recorded tersely in Le Moniteur under the heading Tribunal Criminel Révolutionnaire, wherein the readership was informed almost daily of death sentences handed out to citizens for various acts of disloyalty to the Nation. "Olympe de Gouges, se disant veuve Aubrey, femme de lettres, âgée de trente-huit ans, native de Montauban, convaincue d'être l'auteur d'écrits tendant à l'établissement d'un pouvoir attentatoire à la souveraineté du peuple, a été condamnée à la peine de mort. Elle s'est déclarée enceinte. On a sursis à l'exécution jusqu'à l'examen de gens de l'art."[66] On November 6, the Moniteur reported that "l'examen de gens de l'art ayant démontré fausse la déclaration de grossesse faite par Olympe de Gouges, condamnée à mort, le sursis a été levé, et l'exécution a eu lieu le 13 brumaire."[67]

On November 17 the Moniteur published this extract from La Feuille de Salut public: "Olympe de Gouges, née avec une imagination exaltée, prit son délire pour une inspiration de la nature. Elle commença par déraisonner, et finit par adopter le projet des perfides qui voulaient diviser la France; elle voulut être homme d'Etat, et il semble que la loi ait puni cette conspiratrice d'avoir oublié les vertus qui conviennent à son sexe."[68]

B. Théroigne de Méricourt.

Far from being the "véritable amazone de la plume"[1] that was Olympe de Gouges, Théroigne de Méricourt participated in the revolution as an agitator and street activist. Her career was a checkered one until the time that she became enchanted with revolutionary ideas and beliefs. She is said, perhaps somewhat more romantically than scientifically, to have died of a malady then known as "revolutionary fever," but before the onset of the illness that eventually caused her death, she led an active and involved existence. Born Anne-Josephe Terwagne in 1762 in Marcourt-sur-Ourthe in the province of Luxembourg, about forty miles from Liège, she left home at an early age, worked at a variety of menial jobs, and eventually determined to become a singer. She is known to have had several lovers and to have lived in London, Geneva, and Rome as well as in Paris.[2]

Many myths have surrounded her activities. Known as "la belle Liègoise," she captured the hearts and the imaginations of many people, including the historians of the nineteenth century. She was often portrayed as the sword-wielding woman in a riding cloak, sometimes mounted on a white horse, who directed the action in the streets during some of the most memorable days of the revolution. She has been called "caméléone," "amante passionnée," "amazone vindicative et sanglante."[3] Although the written record of her involvement is not extensive, her Confessions, Mémoires and letters do supply some details of her participation.

It was rumoured that she had played a major role in the storming of the Bastille in July, 1789 and witnesses at the Châtelet inquiry claimed to have seen her on the march during the October Days of that same year. It was said that she was responsible for the murder of Suleau, a royalist journalist, on August 10, 1792. Much of the fascination with Théroigne comes from the fact the she was a shadowy participant in the grandes journées of the revolution and her actual role has remained shrouded in myth. Her own Confessions[4] clarify to a certain extent many third person accounts that have contributed to the legendary persona. She explains the change in her name, saying that she dropped Anne-Josephe and became Théroigne, a derivation of the family name. "Je m'appelle Théroigne. C'est mon nom de famille et je suis née a Marcour. C'est à Paris et à Versailles qu'on m'a donné mon surnom, lequel, du reste, n'est qu'une déformation du nom Marcour."[5]

Théroigne also described her uncertain position during the spring of 1789 which proved instrumental in her return to Paris and ultimately in her entry into the revolutionary arena. She was in Geneva in April and of that period in her life she said, "Je ne savais où aller. Devais-je me rendre à Rome? à Londres? dans mon pays natal? ou bien en France, où mes intérêts réclaimaient ma présence, car un terme de ma rente était en retard? J'étais perplexe."[6] She was hearing about the issues being debated in France. "Ces nouvelles produisirent sur moi une grande impression; quand j'appris la formation d'une Assemblée nationale, ouverte à tous, je fus enthousiasmée." The decision was made and she left Geneva on April 30 in order to straighten out her business in France and "pour être témoin d'un aussi grand spectacle."[7]

She took up residence in the Hôtel de Toulouse in Paris and later admitted that at first she really had very little understanding of the Revolution. "Je m'occupais de musique et lisais les papiers publics, que je ne comprenais guère." But the general atmosphere of excitement influenced her thoughts and activities. "Je n'avais aucune notion des droits méconnus des peuples, mais j'aimais naturellement la liberté." She began to attend the meetings of the National Assembly on a regular basis. "Un instinct, un sentiment vif, que je ne savais pas définir, me faisait approuver la Révolution, sans trop savoir pourquoi, car je n'avais aucune instruction. Le peu que je sais, je ne l'ai appris que peu à peu en assistant aux séances de l'Assemblée nationale."[8]

Many historians of the nineteenth century contributed to the idea that Théroigne participated on July 14 and placed her in the street at the first sign of an uprising.[9] She was described as having played a leading role, being everywhere at once, giving orders and having them obeyed. She was with the leaders at the Bastille. "Elle faisait placer des détachemens aux barrières et aux principaux postes; elle arrêtait les dépêches que la cour expédiait de Versailles à Paris; enfin elle organisait ces masses indisciplinées et nouvellement armées."[10] According to Théroigne, however, the facts were somewhat different. She maintained that on the evening of July 12, the day that the revolution exploded, she was walking in the streets with a maid. She described her own naiveté. "Je rencontrai des soldats. Je leur demandai s'ils étaient pour le Tiers-Etat. Un officier qui m'entendit voulut m'arrêter et courut quelque temps derrière moi, mais il ne continua pas sa poursuite, quand il eut remarqué que j'étais une femme isolée et curieuse."[11]

Her political education was to continue. "Le lendemain, je vis comme la veille, mais en plus grand nombre, des hommes armés de fusils, d'épées et de piques. Beaucoup de personnes portaient une cocarde verte. Aussitôt que je la vis aux autres, je la pris aussi. Depuis on la quitta pour arborer la cocarde aux trois couleurs nationales. Je la pris également." She stated that since she was not a witness to the important events of July 14 therefore it was not possible for her to describe them as well or as accurately as the public journals. "J'étais au Palais Royal, quand y parvint la nouvelle que la Bastille, assiégée par des citoyens, venait d'être emportée." The people, she said, witnessed this event with great happiness. "Beaucoup pleuraient de joie, criant qu'il n'y aurait plus de Bastille, ni de lettres de cachet."[12] She emphasized, however, that she definitely was not present. "Il est absolument faux que j'ai dit être entrée une des premières dans la Bastille, et que j'ai vu couper ou suivi par la ville la tête de Loney <sic>. J'ai dit pourtant d'avoir été au siège de la Bastille; mais c'était faux, car je n'y ai pas été et ne l'ai dit, que faire enrager mes conducteurs à leur tour, eux, qui tâchèrent d'en faire autant à moi en se déchaînant de mille manières contre les patriotes."[13] It appears that Théroigne was telling the truth, for the only woman whose name was recorded among the conquerors of the Bastille was Marie Charpentier.

However, the myths surrounding Théroigne continued to grow. Whether the poets of the nineteenth century made the legend or whether they merely recorded it is uncertain, but we do know that they used the theme of the belle Liègeoise, who was not from Liège but from Marcourt, for their poetry. Barthélemy, Mathieu, and

Baudelaire praised her as heroine of the great days of the Revolution.[14] The image began with the Bastille and was magnified after the events of the October Days and her supposed participation there. Théroigne explains in her Confessions that she moved to Versailles during the summer of 1789 because she was fascinated with the happenings in the National Assembly and wished to be in a place where she could readily observe what was going on. Her interest had been piqued by her walks around the Palais Royal. There she saw enormous changes taking place in the minds and attitudes of the people who frequented the area, observing, she said, "cette aurore de temps nouveaux." She was struck by the air of general goodwill which prevailed. "L'égoïsme semblait être banni de tous les coeurs. Il n'y avait plus de distinction de classes." People conducted themselves as a family. The rich mixed with the poor and spoke with them as with equals. Finally, she explained, "toutes les physionomies me paraissaient changées. Chacun osait développer publiquement son caractère et ses facultés naturelles."[15] Many, she added, had an "air héroïque" and it was generally impossible for a person who possessed any intelligence to regard such a spectacle with indifference. She explained that "cédant à l'irrésistible enthousiasme qui me gagnait, je résolus d'aller habiter Versailles, pour assister aux séances de l'Assemblée nationale." She went to live on the Rue de Noailles at Versailles and at the time when she arrived there the Assembly had just begun to debate the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. She found that the Assembly offered "un beau et noble spectacle, dont la majesté me frappa." Her spirits soared and her political understanding increased. At first, she confessed, her understanding of the deliberations was extremely limited, but gradually "la lumière se fit en moi et je parvins enfin à voir clairement ce qui c'était que le Peuple en face des Privilégiés." She explained that her sympathy for the people grew with her understanding and that it transformed itself "en ardent amour" when she became persuaded that justice and right were on the side of the people.[16]

The details of Théroigne's association with the events of the October Days are sketchy. At the Châtelet inquiry several witnesses reported that they saw her in the streets of Versailles during the late afternoon and evening of the fifth and on the morning of the sixth. Jean-Edmond Tournacheau de Montveran testified that "il aurait vu arriver plusieurs femmes et hommes déguisés en femmes, parmi lesquelles une vêtue d'un habit de cheval écarlette, à cheval et suivi d'un jokei pareillement en rouge" and that this woman, whom he had seen previously at the Assembly, was said to be Thérouenne de Méricourt.[17] As well, Jean-Antoine-Louis Cornier de la Dodinière testified that at 7:30 a.m. on the morning of October 6 "il a remarqué une femme vêtue d'une redingote rouge, ayant sur sa tête un chapeau rond, qui allait de groupes en groupes, et causait avec différentes personnes."[18] Another witness at the Châtelet, François-Xavier Veytard, curé de Saint-Gervais, testified that a woman in a red riding cloak, "du moins autant qu'on en pouvait juger dans l'obscurité," went through the lines of the soldiers of the Flanders Regiment "tenant une corbeille à la main" and the soldiers were taking "petits paquets." He testified that he had heard this woman referred to as "Thérouenne."[19]

Théroigne denied that she had played an active role. Of the October Days she said, "le roi vint à Paris, je ne souviens point quel jour; j'allai au-devant de lui dans les rangs; je tenais lieu d'un soldat, j'étais en Amazone blanche et chapeau rond; je n'ai parlé à personne."[20] Of her participation in the events, she said, "j'étais à l'assemblée nationale le 5 au soir, lorsque les femmes de Paris arrivèrent....Je restai à l'Assemblée jusqu'au soir, mais je la quittai avant qu'elle ne se fût séparée." She recounted how she then stayed in the street due to curiosity, stopping at her own corner and then advancing "jusqu'à la barrière." She reported that she saw the regiment of Flanders and the bodyguards and "le peuple armé avec des canons." On the way home she encountered "trois ou quatre malheureux" who were crying and who complained that they had not eaten in three days. She did not say whether these were men or women. She did say that she took them to her place to look for something to feed them and concluded her account of her activities on that day with the statement, "je ne sortie plus de chez moi ce jour-là."[21]

On the morning of October sixth Théroigne reported that she left her dwelling at 6 or 6:30 a.m. to find that "la salle de l'assemblée n'était point encore ouverte, la milice nationale était devant le château; il y avait un monde infini." She stated that she went to several groups to hear what they were saying. She joined in the conversations which were mainly about the aristocrats. Then, she said, "je m'avançais enfin jusque dans les rangs de la milice nationale pour voir le peuple, qui était au prise avec des gardes du corps mais je ne pus rien à voir." She said that when the Assembly hall was opened she took her usual place in tribune number six. Only a few deputies had arrived thus far and one of them moved that the Assembly should relocate to the salon d'Hercule in the château. Of this motion Théroigne declared, "Il me parut à moi et au peuple, qui était dans la même tribune, que si l'Assemblée nationale se déplaçait, elle blesserait sa dignité et violerait ses décrets, parce que ses déliberations auraient cessé d'être publiques à cause du local, qu'il était donc plus convenable, qu'elle envoyasse une nombreuse députation au Roi."[22] Later, Théroigne was to say of the October days, "Moi? voilà justement, Monsieur, en quoi vous vous trompez grandement. Je n'ai pas été mêlée à ce fameux cortège. Je n'habitais plus à Paris. Tout l'été de l'année 1789, je demeurais à Versailles."[23]

Of her activities on those days she declared that she was present "mais seulement pour voir la foule arrivée de Paris. Que voulez-vous, je faisais comme tout le monde." She said that she did not enter the château. "Les gardes du corps en défendaient l'entrée à tout le monde. Je n'ai été que jusqu'à la grille qui entoure le parc. La porte était fermée."[24] When asked whether she had seen the heads of the bodyguards paraded for the crowds, she replied, "non, car j'étais déjà à l'Assemblée nationale, quand le roi et la reine sont passés, se rendant à Paris, avec la peuple pour cortège. Les têtes de ces malheureux avaient été portées au bout de piques, à ce qu'on en disait."[25] When asked what she wore that day, Theroigne replied, "je ne me rappelle pas. Mais en général, je portais toujours une 'Amazone,' j'en avais une blanche, une rouge et une noir. Je n'en avais pas d'autres." She also said that she was never mounted on a horse at this time and that she in no way disturbed the soldiers of the Flanders Regiment. The regiment, she said, "était calme, en bon ordre, et rangé en bataille."[26] In this way Théroigne denied the involvement widely attributed to her in these events.

After the October Days she moved back to Paris. "Quand l'Assemblée nationale s'installa à Paris, je l'y suivis. L'hôtel de Grenoble, dans la rue du Bouloi, devint mon logis." She said that she continued to observe the sessions, morning and evening. "A force de me voir, tout le monde me connaissait. Le peuple et les députés se prirent d'estime pour moi, tant à cause de mon patriotisme que de ma conduite privée."[27] Records show that she was extremely active during her months in Paris. She proposed the formation of a patriotic club among the Feuillants who sat with her daily in the tribune. "On gouta mon projet. Pendant tout le temps que ce club naissant s'assembla chez moi, il compta jusqu'à douze ou treize membres." She recounted in her Confessions how her idea of giving civic crowns and cocardes to patriots in the National Assembly was popular and successful.[28] Seven cockades were given to members of the Comité de la Constitution. "Tout le monde voulait concourir à la petite dépense qui cela m'occasionnait; mais par un effet de mon zèle patriotique, je ne l'acceptai pas." She added that she delivered the cockades to the Abbé Sieyes whom she considered to be the most esteemed of the recipients. She stated proudly that "Monsieur l'abbé vint chez moi pour me remercier."[29]

Théroigne was mercilessly lampooned in the royalist press for an incident which occurred February 4, 1790. She had accompanied the procession of deputies of the National Assembly during the Te Deum at Notre Dame. In her Confessions she explained the situation. "Le jour où les députés se rendirent à Notre-Dame, pour le Te Deum, on m'envoya un billet pour assister à la cérémonie. Mais j'arrivai trop tard et je ne pus percer la foule. Plusieurs députés patriotes m'invitèrent alors à marcher avec eux en procession." She said that she accepted the offer because of "l'envie de voir un spectacle aussi solennel, et puis l'honneur d'être mêlée aux députés dans une cérémonie publique." She said that other people who were not deputies also took part in the procession "mais c'étaient des hommes." She concluded, "A ce moment, et de nouveau extrêmement humiliée, je constatai la force et la persistance de l'orgueil et des préjugés masculins qui oppriment mon sexe et le maintiennent en servitude."[30]

Toward the end of February, 1790, Théroigne addressed the Club des Cordeliers. When she was granted permission to speak, one of the members shouted with enthusiasm, "C'est la reine de Saba qui vient voir le Salomon des districts." Théroigne responded, "Oui, c'est la renommée de votre sagesse qui m'amène au milieu de vous. Prouvez que vous êtes Salomon, que c'est à vous qu'il était réservé de batir le temple." She then went on to propose the construction of a new building to house the Assembly, a "temple," to be constructed on the vacant ground where the Bastille once stood. Her speech was met with great applause.[31]

Théroigne made the decision to remove herself from Paris during the early weeks of 1791. In her Confessions she claimed that this was due to financial problems and the necessity of educating her brothers, a responsibility that had fallen on her from her early days. She observed, "Je me plaisais beaucoup à Paris, mais je n'avais plus assez d'argent pour y rester plus longtemps. J'étais en outre toujours chargée de mes frères, que je ne voulais pas abandonner." She stated that she left the theatre of the Revolution without many regrets "car j'avais tous les jours à souffrir quelques désagréments dans les tribunes de l'Assemblée nationale." Some of the aristocrats were displeased with her zeal and involvement and were sarcastic to her. Some of the patriots were also unfair to her and "au lieu de m'encourager, de me défendre et de me rendre justice, me tournaient en ridicule."[32] It is reasonable to assume that she also wished to absent herself from the upcoming Châtelet inquiry into the events of the previous October. Of this she declared,"On m'assurait qu'on informait contre moi au Châtelet, pour l'affaire des 5 et 6 octobre. N'ayant rien fait dans ces journées fameuses, je ne le craignais pas." She was told that she had made many enemies, "des ennemis contre lesquels toute resistance serait vaine."[33]

In February, 1791, Théroigne said she was kidnapped by two French émigrés, hired by Mercy-Argenteau, while staying at the White Ox Inn in the small village of La Boverie in Luxembourg. She was accused of having plotted to kill Marie-Antoinette and was taken on a gruelling journey which terminated in an Austrian prison at Kufstein. There she was imprisoned until the following November and in her Confessions she described the mental and physical anguish of this period. The charges against her were never proven and she was articulate and intelligent in her defense. Mercy-Argenteau's actual motive was the hope that he or his agents would be able to obtain valuable information from Théroigne about what was happening in France. He thought that she would have much information about people and events there, about revolutionary agents in the Low Countries, and about the intended fate of the royal family. Théroigne had nothing to tell them and did not hesitate to express her opinion that the whole affair was a gross miscarriage of justice. She described her persecutors as "abominable" and "hideux" liars, saying, "non seulement ils ont pour but d'incriminer et souiller une femme innocente, mais ils tendent aussi à compromettre, à déshonorer des personnes respectables et dignes de l'estime publique." Furthermore, she raged, "il n'est pas un habitant de Paris qui, en écoutant cela, ne déclarait que l'absurdité et l'ineptie ne peuvent être poussées plus loin."[34] In fact, she offered to remain an extra six months in prison if she would be allowed to have her story published. "Ce serait pour moi une satisfaction sans égale que celle de livrer au public la connaissance de cette admirable pièce." It would be her greatest revenge. "Ce galimatias insensé, cet odieux travestissement de faits connus de tous, cette oeuvre basse enfin, due à des aristocrates, suffiraient pour confondre mes ennemis, pour les ridiculiser à jamais." Royalists of good sense would realise that "ils ont parfois pour amis ces êtres à la fois bien lâches et bien imbéciles!"[35]

Upon her release in November she went first to Vienna and then to Brussels. She was told that she must not return to France but she chose to ignore this restriction and by January she was back in Paris, telling her story and being regarded as a patriot and heroine by her many admirers. She enjoyed a memorable reception at the Jacobin Club on January 26, 1792. One of the members, Dufourney, had this to say: "Messieurs, je dois vous annoncer un triomphe pour le patriotisme: Mlle. Théroigne, célèbre par son civisme et les persécutions qu'elle a eprouvées de la part de la tyrannie pendant son séjour en Allemagne, est ici, dans la tribune des dames."[36] Théroigne was brought to the front of the room "où elle est reçue avec tout l'intérêt que peut exciter son sexe et ses malheurs." At the invitation of the club she was invited to write an exposé of her persecutions and present it at the next meeting.[37] At the beginning of February she presented the club with a detailed account of her incarceration to which the membership reacted with "l'indignation la plus vive" and she received "la plus haute admiration pour la constance qu'elle a déployée." It was reported that Théroigne advocated war as a means of dealing with enemies and "elle a annoncé que la Révolution française avait des partisans nombreux dans les Pays-Bas, dans l'Allemagne, et jusque dans le palais de l'empereur."[38] From this time on she was regarded as a follower of Brissot. The introduction to her February presentation indicates that she was at the height of her influence and popularity. Introduced by the procureur de la Commune, Pierre Manuel, Théroigne was described as "une des premières amazones de la liberté," "martyre de la Constitution," and "présidente de son sexe."[39]

On March 25, 1792 Théroigne delivered her famous address to the Société Fraternelle des Minimes in which she advocated the formation of battalions of females to serve in the defense of the nation. "Mais, Françoises, actuellement que les progrès des lumières vous invitent à réflechir, comparez ce que nous devrions être dans l'ordre social....nous nous armerons, parce qu'il est raisonnable que nous nous préparions à defendre nos droits, nos foyers, et que nous serions injustes à notre égard et responsables à la Patrie, si la pusillanimité que nous avons contractée dans l'esclavage avait encore assez d'empire pour nous empêcher de doubler nos forces." She went on to say that the example of women's devotion would awaken in the souls of men "les vertus publiques, les passions dévorantes de l'amour de la gloire et de la Patrie."[40] She then alluded to the strength of women in the past. "Françoises, le même sang coule toujours dans nos veines; ce que nous avons fait à Beauvais, à Versailles, les 5 and 6 octobre, et dans plusieurs autres circonstances importantes et décisives, prouve que nous ne sommes pas étrangères aux sentiments magnanimes."[41]

On April 23 Théroigne interrupted a meeting of the Jacobin Club as a result of remarks made by Collot d'Herbois, one of the members. He reported that Théroigne had stated in the Café Hottot on the Terrasse de Feuillants that she had withdrawn her support from him and from Robespierre. According to the club minutes, "<il> se félicite que Mlle. Théroigne lui ait retiré à lui-même son amitié, en même temps qu'à M. Robespierre." The response was "rires universels."[42] Théroigne's response was immediate and energetic. "En ce moment Mlle. Théroigne était à gauche, dans la tribune des dames: irritée de l'apostrophe et de la rumeur qu'elle faisait naître, elle s'élance par-dessus la barrière qui la séparait de l'intérieur de la salle; surmontant les efforts qu'on faisait pour la retenir, elle s'approche du bureau avec des gestes animés, et insiste à demander la parole; mais enfin elle est éconduite hors de la salle. Le tumulte continue. M. le Président se couvre, et l'orage se dissipe."[43]

Problems confronting the Revolution in the spring of 1792 were many. In April France declared war on Austria. The Girondin ministry, formed in March, was dissolved in June. On the twentieth of June, a date which marked the double anniversary of the Tennis Court Oath (1789) and the flight of the king to Varennes (1791), an insurrection took place in Paris. Exactly what role Théroigne played that day is uncertain. Legend has it that the "jeune et belle femme, vêtue en homme, un sabre à la main, un fusil sur l'épaule et assise sur un canon" was Théroigne.[44] It was even claimed that she pushed the wheel of the cannon that was hoisted to the second floor of the Tuileries Palace.[45] In reality, evidence, or lack of it, points to Théroigne's absence from the events of that day. There is no sure evidence that she was part of one of the processions that went from the Faubourgs St. Antoine and St. Marcel to the Tuileries or even that she was part of the crowd that assembled there. There is evidence, however, that she was active the day before. There is a police report of the twentieth of June "sur les desseins supposés des faubourgs Saint-Antoine et Saint-Marcel à l'egard du Roi...et sur les provocations adressés au peuple par la demoiselle Théroigne, le 19 juin, pour appuyer l'entreprise des faubourgs."[46] No serious documentation has been found to date to say that she was an active participant in the events that took place during the day on June 20.

It seems, rather, that it was on August 10 that Théroigne did appear in the role of revolutionary heroine, where royalist tradition had placed her during the October Days. If not exactly a heroine, at least she is known to have played an active leadership role in the events of August 10 and was later recognized by the Paris Commune for her efforts. She is said to have incensed the crowds with inflammatory speeches and her name is linked with that of François-Louis Suleau because of her participation in the bloody activities of that day. Suleau was a "collaborateur" on the royaliste journal "Actes des Apôtres" which had often pilloried Théroigne.[47] On the morning of August 10 Suleau was arrested on the Terrasse des Feuillants. He was wearing the uniform of a grenadier of the National Guard and was carrying false papers. He was taken to the Section des Tuileries and held with several other known royalists who had been incarcerated during the night. As the crowd gathered at the Tuileries, these men became the target of increasing popular fury. Some managed to flee but nine were unable to escape, of which one was Suleau. The crowd wished to execute these captives and became increasingly insistent in their bloodthirsty demands. When Théroigne made her appearance the crowd was already out of hand. According to some accounts Théroigne did not even recognize Suleau until a woman in the crowd called his name. That alerted Théroigne to the fact that he was there.[48] It was reported that while the crowd was howling for blood, Theroigne, brandishing "le sabre et bandoulière," arrived and claimed the prisoners in the name of the people. The president of the section, Bonjour, had only about two hundred soldiers and he did not in any way resist the wishes of the crowd.[49] Suleau's murder took place in the midst of the howling crowd and afterwards, it is reported, Théroigne jumped into the middle of the Marseillais troops who in turn knocked over the fence surrounding the Carrousel. She was reportedly injured.[50] On

September 3 the Moniteur reported that "Les fédérés (les Marseillais) viennent de décerner des couronnes civiques à Mlle. Lacombe, Théroigne, et Reine Audu qui se sont distinguées par leur courage dans la journée du 10 août."[51]

There seems to be no proof and no consensus on exact details of Suleaus's murder. Certainly there is no firm evidence that Théroigne cut his throat.[52] When she jumped Suleau he supposedly fought like a lion and tried to stab her but he was overcome by the crowd and cut to pieces.[53] However, Ernst also says that most contemporary chroniclers implicated her in the murder. They regarded her, he says, as "plus ou moins" responsible for these bloody events.[54] All accounts do agree that Théroigne was, on August 10, in a state of aggravated revolutionary fervour. She was an enthusiastic participant in the activities of the crowd. A supposedly firsthand account in the Moniteur, generally assumed to be a description of Théroigne, illustrates the extent of her emotion and involvement. The eye-witness stated that he had seen "une demoiselle aimable et jeune encore, un sabre à la main, montée sur une pierre." He stated that he had heard her harangue the crowd. She declared the patrie endangered. Saving the country, she told her audience, depended upon their arms, their courage, and their patriotism. "Armez-vous donc, et courez au château des Tuileries. C'est là," she said, "que sont les chefs de vos ennemis." She encouraged the crowd to exterminate "cette race de vipères" which had for three years "ne fait que conspirer contre vous." She warned that "dans huit jours, vous serez exterminés, si vous ne remportez pas aujourd'hui cette victoire." She proclaimed that the crowd must choose between life and death, between liberty and slavery. "Respectez l'Assemblée nationale, respectez les propriétés, faites vous-mêmes justice de pillards, et partons."[55] The testimony of the same witness indicates that there were many women active in the crowd that day. "Aussitôt des milliers de femmes se sont précipitées dans la mêlée, les unes avec des sabres, les autres avec des piques; j'en ai vu plusieurs tuer elles-mêmes des Suisses; des autres encourageaient leurs maris, leurs enfants, leurs frères. Plusieurs de ces femmes ont été tuées, sans que les autres en fussent intimidées, je les ai entendu s'écrier ensuite: Qu'ils viennent ces Prussiens, ces Autrichiens; nous perdrons beaucoup de monde, mais pas un des des g...f... ne s'en retournera."[56]

Théroigne was quiet during the months that followed. There is no evidence that she played any part in the September Massacres and little historical record of her activities. During this period France faced increasing problems and the conflict within the Convention between the Jacobins and the Girondins accelerated. Théroigne's fortune was now depleted. She lived in a room at 273, Rue Saint-Honoré, close to the Jacobin Club and the Salle du Manège. She remained a supporter of the Girondins and her *Adresse* aux 48 Sections, written approximately May 10, 1793, strongly reflected some of their views. In it she warned against the foreigners on French soil whose goal it was to incite civil war. She also expressed the opinion that because of political differences at home, the loyalties of the French troops were divided and confused. "Nos armées et nos généraux ne sachant s'ils se battent pour la République ou pour des partis, ou pour un tyran qu'ils craindreaient avec raison voir s'élever comme à Rome pour mettre fin à nos divisions, seraient découragés."[57] She proposed a system whereby women would participate in patriotic life in a positive but non-military manner, unlike the proposals made in 1792 for female soldiers. The women's task would be to improve virtue and patriotism among the people and to supply a general atmosphere of support and encouragement for soldiers. "Leur récompense serait d'avoir une place marquée dans nos fêtes nationales et de surveiller les maisons d'éducation consacrées à notre sexe."[58]

On May 15 Théroigne was to engage in an altercation with women belonging to the Club des Citoyennes Républicaines Revolutionnaires, an event that would signal the end of her public life. As we have seen, these women were supporters of the Jacobins and were becoming more and more strident and violent in the expression of their opinions. On the morning of May 15, Théroigne encountered a group of these women on the Terrasse des Feuillants as she went as usual to observe the Convention. Reports say that she angered them by making remarks in favor of Brissot. She was stripped by the angry women who then subjected her to a public whipping. It is said that she was rescued from these women by Marat. Several journals published accounts of the incident in the days which followed and two police reports dealt with the incident. The first, on the May 15, reported that "la fameuse Théroigne" had been whipped "sous le vestibule de la Convention par les femmes qui depuis quelques jours s'y attroupaient en grand nombre et elles l'ont conduite au Comité de sûreté générale où elles ne l'ont laissée en liberté que parce que Marat a déclaré qu'il la prenait sous sa protection, elles prétendaient que cette citoyenne était une fausse patriote."[59] The next report, dated May 16, stated that "les femmes qui s'ameutent autour de la Convention avaient placé hier un détachement d'entre elles aux portes des premières tribunes des neuf heures du matin, pour empecher les femmes favorisées par les députés de passer avec des cartes d'entrée. Elles ont mis dans cette mission toute l'insolence possible.... La citoyenne Théroigne, fouettée par ces espèces de mégères, leur avait dit qu'elle leur ferait mordre la poussière tôt ou tard."[60]

The Courrier des départements reported on May 17 that "une heroine de la Revolution" had encountered "un petit échec" on the Terrasse des Feuillants. She was, according to this source, recruiting women for the Rolandists when "malheureusement, elle s'adressa à des dévotes de Robespierre et de Marat." These women did not wish to see the ranks of the Brissotins increase and Théroigne had to be rescued from them by the National Guard and by Marat who "pris la fustigée sous sa protection." On May 18 the Révolutions de Paris described the incident. "Depuis plusieurs jours, un certain nombre de femmes font la police dans le jardin des Tuileries et dans les corridors de la Convention nationale. Elles se chargent de la visite des cocardes et arrêtent les gens qui leur paraissent suspects. Ce sont elles qui mercredi 15 du courant donnèrent le fouet a Théroigne en l'appelant brissotine."[61]

From this time on sources record only the rapid decline of Théroigne's mental stability, her increasing confusion, and details of her hospitalization. A substantial amount has been written on this phase of her life. Letters to her banker, to officials such as St. Just, and the medical expositions of Dr. Esquirol, who looked after her in the last stages of her illness, form the basis of information. An appeal from her brother described the deterioration of her health and requested that he be allowed to assume control of her business affairs. Entitled Mémoire, the following passage is taken from an extract of his petition to the president and judges of the tribunal of the first arrondissement. "Le Terwagne expose qu'Anne-Josephe Terwagne, sa soeur, demeurant à Paris, rue Honoré, section de Montagne, No. 273, est dans un état de démence qui ne peut lui permettre de gérer et administrer ses biens, la réduit en conséquence dans un état de détresse qui afflige l'exposant et fait même craindre pour la sûreté des voisins de ladite susnommée, s'il n'était pourvu promptement à sa sûreté personelle." The document goes on to request that officials set a date to meet with friends and family to agree on dispersal of goods and the expedition of other matters of business. This appeal took place in June 30, 1794. Three days earlier the two members of the Comité révolutionnaire de la section Le Pelletier had visited Théroigne's apartment and the text of their report describes how they had examined and sealed the papers found there and put them in trust with the portière. "Nous avons procedé à la visite la plus exacte de tous ses papiers que nous avons réunis dans deux cartons portant numéro un et numéro deux et sur lesquels nous avons apposés nos scellés ainsi que ceux de la citoyenne Théroigne; nous avons également posé nos scellés sur une cassette renfermant des papiers, pour le tout être porté à notre comité et en faire vérification en présence de la citoyenne Théroigne." In the margin there is a note which says, "A l'égard d'un sabre que nous avons trouvé chez la nommée Théroigne, le citoyen Jarlet s'en charge pour le déposer au comité de sa section."[62] It is possible that this was the sword described by witnesses which was supposedly used to marshal the crowds during the October days and on August 10.

A letter to St. Just dated 8 Thermidor an II (July 26, 1794) which had not arrived before his death was found among his papers. In it Théroigne complained to him of her sad situation and requested his help. "J'ai de grandes choses à dire. Je puis vous assurer que j'ai fait des progrès. Je n'ai ni papier, ni lumière, ni rien; mais quand même il faut que je sois libre pour pouvoir écrire; il m'est impossible de rien faire ici."[63]

On September 24, 1794 Théroigne was officially declared insane by a health official of the section Le Pelletier. At this time she was already resident in a house of detention in that section. In December she was released and went to live near her brother on the Rue Croulebarbe, but early in the new year her brother found it necessary to have her hospitalized. She went to the Maison des Folles du Faubourg Saint-Marceau where she remained until 1797 when she was transferred to the hospice de l'Hôtel-Dieu. In December of 1799 she was sent to the Maison des Folles de la Salpêtrière but was transferred almost immediately to the Petites-Maisons where she remained until 1807. She was at that time returned to the Salpêtrière and spent the remainder of her life there.[64]

Théroigne is often regarded as having embodied, in both myth and reality, the very spirit of the Revolution. "Auréolée d'une légende tissée de sang, de folie et d'hystérie,"[65] she participated with dedication and enthusiasm in the remarkable events of many of the great days. One unflattering contemporary portrait likened the pattern of her life and political involvement to that of the revolution itself. "A la fin de sa carrière elle avait absolument perdu toutes ses grâces. Elle était livide, couperosée, décharnée. Enfin, elle fut l'image ambulante de la Révolution. Brillante dans ses commencements, énergumène dans son cours, dégoûtante de fange et de sang après le 10 août."[66] No doubt the reality of the situation was somewhat less melodramatic. Théroigne was most likely the unfortunate victim of some illness which resulted in the slow disintegration of her mental faculties and led eventually to her death in June of 1817 at the age of fifty-five.

C. Madame Roland.

The background which inspired Madame Roland's participation in the revolution was quite different to that of Olympe de Gouges or Théroigne de Mericourt. Born Marie Jeanne Phlipon in Paris in 1754, she lived on the Quai d'Horloge, near the Pont Neuf, during her childhood. From an early age she was encouraged in her study of history, music, science, and philosophy and she emerged as an astute and educated observer of humanity with an exceptional understanding of human affairs. She was well-prepared for the role that she would play in French politics during the days of the Revolution. Although she had no tolerance for the aristocracy or the monarchy, she trusted neither the judgement nor the capabilities of the common man in matters of government. She felt that after centuries of ignorance he was not in a fit condition to take on the onerous responsibilities of representative government. This attitude was to color her thinking and her activities in matters of politics throughout the years of revolution. When her husband, Jeane-Marie Roland de la Platière, whom she married in 1780, became Minister of the Interior in the first Girondin ministry in March, 1792, she proved beyond a doubt that she was a person of exceptional skill and understanding. Her aptitude for learning and her ability to write and debate were valuable attributes in the role she was to play as the influential wife of Roland. It was often said that it was she, and not her husband, who was the real minister and when the Girondin deputies were purged in the spring of 1793, she was arrested almost immediately.

From Paris, where the Rolands spent the first eight months of their married life, the couple moved in February, 1781, to Amiens where Roland was based as inspector of manufactures. During the four years that they lived in Amiens Madame Roland seems to have been uninterested in politics and devoted mainly to the care of her daughter, Eudora, born in 1781. In June of 1784 Roland succeeded in obtaining, thanks to his wife who recognized a golden opportunity and made immediate application for the position, a transfer to Lyon where the family lived on the Roland estate, La Clos de la Platière, until 1791. It was from here that Madame Roland expressed her initial reactions to events in the opening days of the Revolution. She was extremely suspicious and apprehensive, not at all convinced that power could be wrested from the hands of the king and nobles. In August of 1789 she wrote to Brissot in Paris and expressed her concerns. "Au nom de dieu, gardez-bien de déclarer que l'Assemblée nationale peut fixer irrévocablement la Constitution."[1] On September 4 she warned in a letter to Bosc that no one should be fooled by the king's acquiescence. His pledge of allegiance to the National Assembly really only proved that he was afraid. She stated that "nous sommes plus près que jamais du plus affruex esclavage si l'on se laisse aveugler par une fausse confiance." A few weeks later, in response to the October Days, Madame Roland expressed a restrained enthusiasm. She said, "tout chagrin cesse, toute douleur est suspendue....Le despotisme a levé le masque; la nation a pris son élan." But now "il faut une administration réglée, des moyens sûrs, une marche sage et une vigilance éclairée." She warned explicitly that the aristocracy appeared now to be quiet but only "jusqu'à ce qu'elle se soit appuyée de troupes étrangères."[2]

Despite these reactions to the exciting events of the summer of 1789, this period represented a quiet, almost pastoral, time in the personal lives of the Rolands. It came to an end, however, when M. Roland was appointed to carry out the somewhat delicate mission of negotiating a loan for the municipality of Lyon with the National Assembly. In February of 1791 they went to Paris and, with the exception of a brief interval at the end of the year when they returned to the country, they spent their remaining years there. It was at this time that the Rolands became acquainted with the leading figures in the Jacobin club and the National and Legislative Assemblies. Madame Roland presided over a revolutionary salon in their flat in the Hôtel Britannique on the Rue Guenégaud. Brissot, Pétion, Buzot, and Robespierre came there at first to discuss the day's events in the Assembly. Later they discussed their plans for implementing reforms. These "men of the left" inspired hope in Madame Roland that the conservative forces in the Assembly would be ably challenged.

The first major event which occurred after the Rolands' return to Paris was the king's flight to Varennes in June, 1791. Madame Roland expressed her pleasure at the event which appeared to herald the imminent end of the monarchy. "Le Roi et sa famille sont partis; c'est loin d'être un malheur, si nous avons du bon sens, de l'énergie et de l'union." She added that most of the people felt the same way she did, "car la masse est saine et voit juste."[3] She used the occasion to describe the attitudes of several of their associates to the same event. Of Robespierre she had this to say, "J'avais été frappée de la terreur dont il parut pénétré le jour de la fuite du roi à Varennes; je le trouvai l'après-midi chez Petion, ou il disait avec inquiétude que la famille royale n'avait pas pris ce parti sans avoir dans Paris une coalition qui ordonnerait la Saint-Barthélemy des patriotes, et qu'il attendait à ne pas vivre dans les vingt-quatre heures."[4] She also explained that the attitudes of Pétion and Brissot were different. She stated that they believed this action to be beneficial to the revolution. "Pétion et Brissot disaient, au contraire, que cette fuite du roi était sa perte, et qu'il fallait en profiter; que les dispositions du peuple étaient excellentes; qu'il serait mieux éclairé sur la perfidie de la cour par cette démarche que n'auraient pu faire les plus sages écrits."[5] They believed that this fact had made it clear that the king did not wish to have the constitution which he had approved and that this was the time to prepare the people for a republic. She decribed Robespierre as being very happy when the king was arrested and brought back. "Il voyait par la tous les malheurs prévenus, et cessait de craindre pour lui."[6] The others regarded it as an affliction. "Ils trouvaient que c'était la rentrée de la peste dans le gouvernement, que les intrigues allaient recommencer, et que l'effervescence du peuple, apaisé par le plaisir de voir retenir le coupable, ne servirait plus à seconder les efforts des amis de la liberté."[7]

The occasion of Varennes inspired in Madame Roland some general considerations on revolution. She declared that "il est fort difficile de ne point se passionner en révolution; il est même sans exemple d'en faire aucune sans cela: on a de grands obstacles à vaincre; on ne peut y parvenir qu'avec un activité, un dévouement qui tiennent de l'exaltation ou qui la produisent. Dès-lors on saisit avidement ce qui peut servir, et l'on perd la faculté de prévoir ce qui pourra nuire."[8]

The massacre of the Champ de Mars was the first event of importance actually witnessed by Madame Roland. She explained that she had gone there on July 17 out of curiosity. "Il n'y avait pas plus de deux ou trois cents personnes éparses aux environs de l'autel de la patrie, sur lequel des députés des Cordeliers, des sociétés fraternelles, portant des piques avec écriteaux déclamatoires, haranguaient les assistans et alimentaient l'indignation contre Louis XVI."[9] She said that since the Jacobins were retracting their petition demanding that the dethronement of the king, it was announced that the citizens must make another petition and present it the next day. "Ce fut alors que les partisans de la cour, sentant la nécessité d'en imposer par la terreur, combinèrent les moyens de frapper un grand coup; les menées furent preparées en conséquence; la proclamation inopinée et la brusque exécution de la loi martiale opérèrent ce qu'on a justement appelé le massacre du Champ de Mars."[10] She noted that the organization of the Feuillants had been arranged for this time in order to weaken the Jacobins. Everything proved that the court was superior to all other factions in ability to intrigue. The Rolands feared for the safety of Robespierre under these circumstances. "Je ne connais pas d'effroi comparable à celui de Robespierre dans ces circonstances; on parlait effectivement de lui faire son procès, probablement pour l'intimider: on disait qu'il s'ourdissait une trame aux Feuillans contre lui et les commissaires à la rédaction de la pétition des jacobins." Due to their concern for Robespierre she said that "nous nous fîmes conduire chez lui, au fond du Marais, à onze heures du soir, pour lui offrir un asile; mais il avait déjà quitté son domicile."[11]

In mid-September, 1791, after seven months in Paris, the Rolands returned to Lyon, the mission with which they had been entrusted now complete. In her Mémoires Madame Roland says that they stayed in touch with both Robespierre and Buzot. She spoke at this time of her relationship with Buzot, who would later become her lover, albeit in a somewhat ethereal manner. During this period she wrote some flattering letters to Robespierre. Later, as she languished in prison, she must have hated herself for having written them. In a letter dated September 27, 1791 she went on at some length on the topics of liberty, equality and happiness and

applauded Robespierre for his efforts toward these worthy ends. "Vous avez beaucoup fait, Monsieur, pour démontrer et répandre ces principes; il est beau, il est consolant de pouvoir se rendre ce témoignage à un âge où tant d'autres ne savent point encore quelle carrière leur est réservée; il vous en reste une grande à parcourir pour que toutes les parties répondent au commencement et vous êtes sur un théâtre où votre courage ne manquera pas d'exercise." She rhapsodized that she "apprendrai avec joie" the extent of his success. "J'appelle ainsi vos soins pour le triomphe de la justice, car la publication des vérités qui intéressent la félicité publique est toujours un succès pour la bonne cause."[12]

In December of 1791 the Rolands left La Clos and returned to Paris. Their purpose this time was to attempt to obtain a pension for Roland as a decree issued the previous September had abolished the positions of inspectors of manufactures. With this decree Roland had been left with neither employment nor pension. The split within the Jacobin Club became more pronounced during the winter months of 1792. In March of that year Roland was asked to be Minister of the Interior in the ministry which reflected the influence of the Girondins. For a person of such republican sentiment Madame Roland made quite an exhibition of the couple's sudden and unexpected rise to prominence. Madame Roland's friend, Sophie Grandchamp, gave a marvellous description of the transformation. She spoke of kisses and promises of everlasting loyalty exchanged and described the scene that took place on the evening of the announcement in the Roland salon. "Mon amie, mourante le matin, avait recouvré sa fraîcheur et ses grâces; elle était entourée d'un cercle nombreux qui l'accablait de louanges....Tous les ministres, les grands de l'Etat, les principaux députés remplissaient la pièce." Two "lacquais" were stationed at the door, "ouvraient un ou deux battants selon le rang de celui qui se présentait et qui leur indiquait lui-même l'étiquette."[13] By early April the possibility of war with Austria was very near. Madame Roland, as a loyal Girondin, supported their aggressive foreign policy and her deteriorating relationship with Robespierre figured prominently in her writings. She questioned him about his reasons for opposing war. Her attempts to correspond with him reflected the growing animosity between the two factions. She wrote him several letters during March and April and in one she invited him to dine with her and Roland at their apartment in the Hotel Brittanique. "Je n'espère de concourir au bien qu'à l'aide des lumières et des soins des sages patriotes; vous êtes pour moi à la tête de cette classe. Venez promptement, j'ai hâte de vous voir et de vous réiterer l'expression de ces sentiments, que rien ne saurait altérer."[14]

On April 25, following the French declaration of war on Austria, having had no reply from Robespierre, Madame Roland wrote to him again. "Je vous ai vu, avec peine, persuadé que quiconque avec des connaissances pensait autrement que vous sur la guerre n'était pas un bon citoyen." She emphasized that she had not committed the same injustice with regard to him. "Je connais d'excellents citoyens qui ont une opinion contraire à la votre, et je ne vous ai pas trouvé moins estimable pour voir autrement qu'eux." She explained that she wished to know his reasons for the position he had taken and said that he had promised to communicate with her. However, she complained, "vous m'avez rien fait connaître, et, dans cet intervalle, vous soulevez l'opinion publique contre ceux qui ne voient pas comme vous." She reminded him of ideas expressed the last time they met. These, she said, went as follows: "soutenir la Constitution, la faire exécuter avec popularité, voilà ce qui me semblait devoir être actuellement la boussole du citoyen, dans quelque place qu'il se trouve." She also took the liberty of reminding him that time would tell all. Its justice was slow but sure. "<Le temps> fait l'espoir et la consolation des gens de bien. J'attendrai d'elle la confirmation ou la justification de mon estime pour ceux qui en sont l'objet." She concluded, "c'est à vous, Monsieur, de considerer que cette justice du temps doit à jamais éterniser votre gloire ou l'anéantir pour toujours."[15] The silence which greeted this letter must have seemed ominous even to its author.

In June of that same year the attack on the Tuileries took place. Throughout the preceding weeks Madame Roland had become increasingly furious with the king who had used his veto to oppose penalizing refractory priests. He had also used it to oppose the suggestion of the Minister of War that an armed camp of twenty thousand federes from the provinces should be established in Paris. On June 10 Madame Roland wrote a letter to the king. It was sent under her husband's name but there is no doubt of its authorship. In her Mémoires she explained, "je fis la fameuse lettre....j'écrivais avec lui <mon mari>, comme j'y mangeais, parce que l'un m'était presque aussi naturel que l'autre, et que, n'existant que pour son bonheur, je me consacrais à ce qui lui faisait le plus de plaisir....Ayant tous deux les mêmes principes et un même esprit, nous finissions par nous accorder sur le mode, et mon mari n'avait rien a perdre en passant par mes mains."[16] She attempted in the letter to make Louis XVI cognizant of his responsibilities as a monarch. She opened with a warning that France was on the brink of an explosion. "L'état actuel de la France ne peut subsister long-temps; c'est un état de crise dont la violence a atteint le plus haut degré; il faut qu'il se termine par un éclat qui doit intéresser Votre Majesté, autant qu'il importe à tout l'empire." She explained the importance of the Constitution, stating that although some people are not in favor of it, the majority wish to maintain it. The majority had sworn to defend it and "elle a vu avec joie la guerre qui lui offrait un grand moyen de l'assurer." She explained where the king had gone wrong in his thinking. "Votre Majesté jouissait de grandes prérogatives qu'elle croyait appartenir à la royauté. Elevée dans l'idée de les conserver, elle n'a pu se les voir enlever avec plaisir." These ideas had, according to Madame Roland, supplied ideas to the enemies of the revolution. They had counted on secret support until such time that open approval would be allowable. The nation understood these sentiments and distrust of the monarchy was the result. "Votre Majesté a donc été constamment dans l'alternative de céder à ses premières habitudes, à ses affections particulières, ou de faire des sacrifices dictés par la philosophie, exigés par la nécessité." The consequences would serve either "d'enhardir les rebelles, en inquiétant la nation, ou d'apaiser celle-ci, en vous unissant avec elle."[17]

She stated then that "la déclaration des droits est devenue un évangile politique; et la constitution française, une religion pour laquelle le peuple est prêt à périr." She reached even greater heights in her description of the patiot's attachment to his country. "La patrie n'est point un mot que l'imagination se soit complue d'embellir; c'est un être auquel on a fait des sacrifices, à qui l'on s'attache chaque jour davantage, par les sollicitudes qu'il cause; qu'on a crée par de grands efforts, qui s'élève au milieu des inquiétudes, et qu'on aime par ce qu'il coûte, autant que par ce qu'on en espère. Toutes les atteintes qu'on lui porte, sont des moyens d'enflammer l'enthousiasme par

elle."[18] She warned the king that an explosion of internal discontent was likely to take place at the same time that the foreign armies outside France decided to attack. Some confidence in the king's intentions would serve to calm the emotions threatening to explode. She noted that it was evident that the Constitution could work and that the government would have all the power that it needed to function as soon as the king, "voulant absolument le triomphe de cette constitution, soutiendra le corps législatif de toute la puissance de l'exécution, ôtera tout prétexte aux inquiétudes du peuple, et tout espoir aux mécontents." She also described the effects of the use of force to bring about the king's wishes, saying, "quand on aurait déployé la force, pour contraindre l'Assemblée; quand on aurait répandu l'effroi dans Paris, la division et la stupeur dans ses environs, toute la France se lèverait avec indignation, et, se déchirant elle-même dans les horreurs d'une guerre civile, développerait cette sombre énergie, mère des vertus et des crimes, toujours funeste à ceux qui l'ont provoqué." She went on to say that she knew that "le langage austère de la vérité" is rarely welcomed near the throne. She knew also, she said, that it is because this language is never heard that "les révolutions deviennent nécessaires". She concluded, "la vie n'est rien pour l'homme qui estime ses devoirs au-dessus de tout; mais après le bonheur de les avoir remplis, le bien auquel il soit encore sensible est celui de prouver qu'il la fait avec fidélité; et cela même est une obligation pour l'homme public." The letter was signed by Roland and dated "le 10 juin 1792, l'an IV de la liberté."[19]

The response of the king was swift and decisive. Dated the thirteenth of June, his letter read, "vous voudrez bien, Monsieur, remettre le portefeuille du département de l'Intérieur que je vous avais confié à M. Mourgues, que je viens d'en charger. Louis."[20] Madame Roland's eloquence had resulted in the loss of her husband's position and the end of the first Girondin ministry.

After this fall from power, the Rolands moved to a small apartment on he Rue de la Harpe, where Girondin deputies discussed some of the policies that led to the insurrection of August 10, 1792. As part of their plan to pressure the king into reappointing Roland and the other Girondin ministers, they decided, perhaps at the suggestion of Madame Roland herself, who had a close personal relationship with Charles Barbaroux, the Girondin deputy from Marseille, to call to Paris the National Guardsmen, or federes, from Marseille. Therefore Madame Roland was less than candid in her statement in her Mémoires that she was greatly surprised by the events of August 10.[21] As Claude Perroud put it, "il est certain aussi que Madame Roland s'indignait à la seule pensée d'un rapprochement possible entre la gironde et la cour, et faisait un grief à Vergniaud d'en avoir admis l'idée dans son célèbre discours du 3 juillet. Ce qu'il lui fallait, ce qu'elle attendait, c'était la déchéance ou du moins la suspension du roi."[22] It seems that Madame Roland had prior knowledge of some of the planning for the August 10 insurrection; perhaps her most direct contribution was the influence that she exercised over Barbaroux in bolstering his courage and encouraging him in his plans.

Of the actual events of August 10, Madame Roland said little. "Tout le monde connaît la révolution du 10 août; je n'en sais pas plus que le public à cet égard; car instruite de la grande marche des affaires tant que Roland a été homme public et la suivant avec intérêt même lorsqu'il n'était plus en place, je n'ai jamais été confidente de ce qu'on peut appeler les petites manoeuvres de même qu'il n'a jamais été agent de cette espèce."[23]

After August 10, the Girondin ministers, including Roland, were reinstated, and during the period that ensued Madame Roland's dislike of Danton increased enormously and dominated much of her writing. He was a continual thorn in her political side despite his initial efforts to win her favor. She was horrified by the shocking events of the September massacres. The Girondins began to defend and extol law and order. On September 5 Madame Roland wrote Bancal that "nous sommes sous le couteau de Robespierre et de Marat." On September 9 she described a massacre at Versailles, saying, "mon ami Dton. conduit tout. Robp. est son mannequin, Mat. tient sa torche et son poignard; ce farouche tribun règne et nous ne sommes que des opprimés, en attendant que nous tombions ses victimes."[24] Two days later she referred to "la tempête qui gronde toujours sur nos têtes." [25]

This animosity that had developed between Madame Roland and Danton culminated in Danton's famous public insult. Roland, having been elected as deputy to the National Convention for the department of the Somme, was in a position of having to choose between taking that post or remaining in the cabinet as Minister of the Interior. On September 29 Buzot put forth a motion which invited Roland to continue in his ministerial position. Danton, who had relinquished his place as Minister of Justice in order to be able to take his seat in the Convention, was furious and rose in the Convention to protest. "Personne ne rend plus de justice que moi à Roland; mais je dirai: Si vous lui faites une invitation, faites-la donc aussi à Mme. Roland; car tout le monde sait que Roland n'était pas seul dans son département. Moi, j'étais seul dans le mien."[26] Madame Roland described Danton's reaction, saying that "il s'éleva avec beaucoup de chaleur contre cette invitation; son impétuosité trahit sa haine, lui fit dire beaucoup de choses ridicules, et entr'autres, qu'il faudrait donc aussi m'adresser l'invitation, parce que je n'étais pas inutile au ministère de Roland". She said that in the Convention "les murmures de la désapprobation repoussèrent ces propos envieux."[27] In a general condemnation of Danton she wrote the following passage in her Mémoires: "O Danton! c'est ainsi que tu aiguises les couteaux contre les victimes. Frappe! une de plus augmentera peu tes crimes; mais leur multiplicité ne peut couvrir ta scélératesse ni te sauver de l'infamie." She described him as more cruel than Marius and more horrible than Catalina, surpassing their sins but lacking their greatness.[28]

The autumn of 1792 witnessed the exacerbation of the conflict between the Jacobins and the Girondins. During this time a select group of Girondins met at the Rolands for dinner on Mondays and Fridays. Guests of differing opinions to those of this group soon stopped coming as they were made to feel unwelcome. The Montagnards held their forum in the glare of public scrutiny at the Jacobin club and therefore claimed the right to accuse the Rolands and the Girondins in general of meeting under cover of darkness and of association rife with conspiracy. However, military successes at Valmy in September and at Jemappes in November helped shore up the popularity of the Girondist ministry during the autumn months. After November 20, when the discovery of the secret cache of the king's papers in a wall panel at the Tuileries left little doubt regarding his attitude toward the Revolution, the debate on his fate accelerated. Madame Roland had never been shy about expressing her opinions of Louis. In her Mémoires she berated him for his weakness and ineptitude but at the same time made some attempt to explain his inadequacies. She said that he was neither "l'imbécile abruti" as he was presented to the people nor "l'honnête homme bon et sensible" as his friends thought. In fact, she declared, "la nature en avait fait un être commun" who would have done well in obscurity. He was taught from infancy to be deceitful, to show to each person only that which he wished him to see. She thought that "il faudrait être un idiot pour paraître un sot en pareille situation."[29] On the positive side Louis had a great memory and was very active. He knew well the treaties made by France with her neighbours and he knew history well. He was, in her opinion, "le meilleure géographe de son royaume." He could remember in detail names, events, and anecdotes pertaining to people around him and he was an avid reader. His weaknesses? According to Madame Roland he was "sans élévation dans l'âme, sans hardiesse dans l'esprit, sans force dans le caractère".[30] And these weaknesses she attributed mainly to the influence of the church in the formation of Louis' character. He had had his views restricted and his sentiments stultified by "les préjugés religieux" and "les principes jésuitiques." Religion, she said, "consacrait, d'ailleurs, tous les maximes du despotisme dont s'appuie l'autorité de l'Eglise."[31] Louis was afraid of hell and of excommunication and when controlled by such forces, theorized Madame Roland, it would be impossible not to be a poor king. She also speculated that had it been two centuries earlier and had he had a reasonable wife, Louis would not have made "plus de bruit dans le monde que tant d'autres princes de sa race qui ont passé sur la scène sans y faire beaucoup de bien ni de mal."[32] Unfortunately, he ruled in this time of great upheaval and had been ill-prepared to do so. Madame Roland described at some length Louis' habit of either missing the point entirely or changing the topic of discussion during executive meetings. Basing her complaint on information gathered from her husband, she wrote, "à l'occasion de la guerre, il parlait de voyages; à propos d'intérêt diplomatique, il citait les moeurs, ou faisait des questions sur des localités du pays dont il s'agissait." Moreover, "Si l'on examinait l'état de l'intérieur, il appuyait sur quelques details d'agriculture ou d'industrie: il question Roland sur ses ouvrages, Dumouriez sur des anecdotes, et ainsi du reste."[33] According to Madame Roland, "le conseil n'était plus qu'un café où on s'amusait à des bavardises." There were no minutes and no secretary to take them. These meetings would last for three or four hours as often as three times per week, complained Madame Roland, "sans avoir rien fait que quelques signatures."[34]

During the month of December, 1792, the Rolands were subjected to a campaign of slander mounted by the Jacobins which even accused Madame Roland of masterminding a royalist plot and of having corresponded with royalists abroad. She appeared before the Convention on December 7 to defend herself and apparently did a spectacular job. She explained her situation in regard to her husband's position, while describing an exchange between herself and a citizen, Achille Viard, from Bordeaux, who had denounced her husband to the Convention. Madame Roland explained to the Convention that she had expressed her surprise to Viard that he would wish to speak with her rather than with her husband. Viard had answered "que le ministre était si surchargé d'affaires qu'il ne pourrait lui indiquer qu'un rendez-vous fort éloigné; que mon intervention pourrait en rapprocher le terme." She reported that she had explained "que je n'étais qu'à côté des affaires, que ce n'était pas à moi de disposer du temps du citoyen Roland." Furthermore she had made it plain that her husband best knew how to arrange his time and "comme fonctionnaire public, il s'en tenait à l'usage de n'entendre les personnes qui ont des affaires à lui communiquer que dans l'ordre de la date de leur présentation." She stated that this marked the end of her conversation with Viard, but added, "Sans avoir l'oeil très exercé, j'ai cru voir dans monsieur un homme qui venait pour observer ce qu'on pensait, plus que pour toute autre chose."[35]

The Moniteur reported that at this point "on applaudit à plusieurs reprises" and "on demande que les honneurs de la séance soient accordés à la citoyenne Roland." Madame Roland then crossed the room "au milieu des applaudissements de la grande majorité de l'assemblée." But Marat, sitting near the galleries during the applause, observed, "Voyez le silence du public: il est plus sage que nous."[36]

During this period the trial of the king dominated the Convention. The deputies unanimously declared him guilty of crimes against the French people, but the Girondins were divided on his fate while the Montagnards almost to a man favored immediate execution. In January, 1793, Buzot and other Girondins began a campaign to have the verdict on his fate delayed until a plebiscite could be held. On January 17 most of the Girondins voted for death, but their hesitation over his fate seemed to cast the pallor of suspicion over their loyalty to the republic. The position of Roland unravelled speedily during the month of January. Madame Roland's pen was strangely still during this time, with a few exceptions. Her husband had endured in the first days of the year attacks in the Jacobin journals, denunciations in the clubs, and attacks in the Convention, but he did not falter. On January 15 Madame Roland wrote a letter to Lavater, a Swiss pastor and family friend, in which she said, "la proscription flotte sur nos têtes, mais il faut ramer toujours....[37] On the nineteenth of January, on a poster addressed to all Parisians, Roland had said, "j'attends qu'on me renvoie ou qu'on m'immole, et je demande qu'on me juge." But suddenly, January 23, two days after the execution of the king, Vergniaud, president of the Convention, read aloud a letter from Roland dated the previous day. "Je viens offrir à la

Convention mes comptes, ma personne et lui donner ma démission".[38] Roland stated that it had been "le dévouement le plus parfait et le plus noble sentiment" that had made him accept the ministerial position twice. His only ambition was that of "l'espèce de gloire qu'attache l'homme de bien à remplir des devoirs pénibles, à se consacrer à sa patrie."[39] The letter which contained these lines was written almost entirely by Madame Roland with only a few minor corrections made in her husband's handwriting.[40] Roland later was to say that if even one of his allies in the Convention had risen to confront his accusers he would have been able "faire front aux plus grands orages,"[41] but not one person spoke in his defense.

Another factor served to defeat Roland. His loyal supporter, prolific scribe, and wife of many years, had chosen this moment to reveal to him details of her personal life which were a great shock to him. She confessed that she was in love with Buzot, loyal friend of Roland and fellow Girondin. Of this relationship Madame Roland wrote in some detail in her _Mémoires_.Details of her romantic involvement with Buzot are drawn from the letters which she wrote him at a later time. Little is said in her January writings of her marital problems but later that year she wrote to Buzot in response to letters he had sent to her. Of these letters she said, "combien je les relis! Je les presse sur mon coeur, je les couvre de mes baisers."[42] It is obvious that more had been going on at Madame Roland's salon than political discussions. She wrote to Buzot in passionate terms but the extent of the relationship is difficult to determine. It appears not to have had a physical side. Even during her imprisonment, and at the age of thirty-nine, she was still saving herself for him. "Ne vois-tu pas aussi qu'en me trouvant seule, c'est avec toi que je demeure? Ainsi, par la captivité, je me sacrifie à mon epoux, je me conserve à mon ami." As events were soon to prove, it really was too late to matter. She added, quite dramatically, that "je dois à mes bourreaux de concilier le devoir et l'amour."[43]

The early months of 1793 were difficult ones for the Rolands. The persecution and slander to which they were subjected took its toll on Madame Roland's health and she decided to return to La Clos at the middle of May. Illness prevented her from leaving the city at once and by the time she had recovered it was too late. On May 31 an insurrectionary committee of the Commune had organized a massive demonstration against the Convention demanding the removal of the Girondins leaders. They also ordered the arrest of Roland. On June 2 twenty-nine Girondin deputies and two ministers had been placed under house arrest. Roland refused to comply with the order for his arrest, thus gaining a few hours. In the interval his wife rushed to the Convention carrying a letter which denounced the illegality of his arrest. In the turmoil that she encountered there she was unable to get a hearing. "Il regne dans l'Assemblée un tumulte impossible à peindre; des pétitionnaires actuellement à la barre demandent l'arrestation des vingt-deux."[44] She reported that she helped one of the threatened Girondins, Rabaut St. Etienne, deputy from Nimes, escape without being seen.[45] At this point she realized that there was no hope that she would be heard or that the letter she had composed would be read. She returned home and she and her husband agreed that Roland should try to flee the city. Madame Roland was determined to stay. As it turned out, they would not see each other again.

Madame Roland made her way back to the Convention that same evening and found that in the midst of such a crisis, the session had been adjourned. "En approchant du Carrousel, je ne vois plus de force armée; deux canons et quelques hommes étaient encore à la porte du palais national; j'avance, la séance est levée!" She was incredulous at this discovery. "Le jour d'une insurrection, lorsque le son du tocsin cesse à peine de frapper les airs, lorsque, deux heures auparavant, quarante mille hommes en armes environnaient la Convention, et que des pétitionnaires menaçaient ses membres à la barre, l'Assemblée n'est pas permanente!"[46] She asked a group of sans-culottes celebrating nearby to explain what had happened. "Oh! à merveille! ils se sont embrassés, et l'on a chanté l'hymne de Marseillaise, là, à l'arbre de la liberté."[47]

The first arrest of Madame Roland occurred at her home in the early hours of June 1. She wrote in her Mémoires that she was shown "un mandat du comité révolutionnaire, sans motif d'arrestation, pour me conduire à l'Abbaye,"[48] Although she protested the illegality of her arrest and pointed out that nocturnal arrests were forbidden, her comments proved useless. "La loi est plus qu'un nom dont on se sert pour insulter aux droits les plus reconnus, mais la force règne, et, si j'oblige à la déployer, ces bruteaux ne connaîtront point de mesure." She knew that resistance was futile.[49] She complained that at times up to fifty people invaded the small apartment where the formalities of her arrest were being carried out and sometimes there were even more, perhaps numbering up to one hundred. She reported that as she left the apartment at abcut seven in the morning she encountered two rows of armed men at the bottom of the staircase. This armed force extended across the street to the carriage which waited to carry her to the Abbaye prison. "La force armée suivit la voiture sur deux files; ce malheureux peuple, qu'on trompe et qu'on égorge dans la personne de ses vrais amis, attiré par le spectacle, s'arrêtait sur mon passage, et quelques femmes criaient à la guillotine!"[50] She was delivered to the Abbaye where she remained until June 24. In her Mémoires she described her reaction on the morning of June 3 when she read in the day's journal of the arrest of the Girondin deputies and ministers. "Le papier me tombe des mains et je m'écrie dans un transport de douleur: Mon pays est perdu!"[51] She saw with clarity that the centre could not hold. Liberty, she said, had been destroyed by crime and error and she predicted with chilling insight what would follow. "La représentation nationale est violée, son unité est rompue; tout ce qu'il y avait dans son sein de remarquable par la probité, unie au caractère et aux talens, est proscrit; la Commune de Paris commande au corps législatif; Paris est perdu: les brandons de la guerre civile sont allumés."[52] Her despair was well-founded. This day marked the ascendancy of the Montagnards in the Convention and, in the opinion of some historians, the beginning of the Reign of Terror in France.

Madame Roland remained in the Abbaye prison until the twenty-fourth of June when she was unexpectedly released only to be rearrested almost immediately.[53] She said that she was overjoyed at her release but as she entered her apartment building two men overtook her. This time she was taken to the Mairie where she was refused the right to hear the deliberations concerning her case. Guards were called when she asked to be admitted. It was explained to her that the first detention had not been legal since it had been ordered by the Commune. "Joubert, autre administrateur aussi violent, mais plus lourd et encore plus sot que Louvet, prit magistralement la parole pour justifier l'administration, en convenant que ma première arrestation était illégale, et qu'il avait fallu me mettre en liberté pour m'arrêter ensuite aux termes de la loi."[54] This new arrest had a basis in law and had been ordered by the Committee of Public Safety. She was accused of conspiring with the Girondins against the nation. This time she was sent to the prison of Sainte-Pélagie.

There is no mistaking the importance attributed by the Jacobins to Madame Roland's political influence. The rapidity of her original arrest, the numerical strength of the force sent to execute it, and the determination of her enemies to maintain her incarceration serve as evidence. It is possible to find in the journals of the preceding months comments which indicate that there were many who regarded her as both head and heart behind the actions of the Girondins. *Le Père Duchêsne*, organ of the Hébertists, provides one example of the vilification of the Rolands by the popular press. Madame Roland was accused of reigning over orgies which were reminiscent of those of ancient Rome. The same source hinted at the liaison between Madame Roland and Buzot, calling the latter one of the "adorateurs" of the "vertueuse épouse" of the "vertueux" Roland. It was not sufficient to portray her as old, ugly, and surrounded by prospective lovers. She was made to appear as a dangerous conspirator, odious to the people.[55] Hébert called her "la reine Coco." He complained that the French had destroyed royalty and now had put in its place another tyranny worse than the original. "La tendre moitié du vertueux Roland mène aujourd'hui la France à la lisière, comme les Pompadour et les du Barry." He implicated the leading Girondin figures. "Brissot est le grand écuyer de cette nouvelle reine, Louvet son chambellan, Buzot le grand chancelier, Fauchet son aumonier, Barbaroux son capitaine des gardes,...Vergniaud le grand maître des cérémonies, Guadet son échanson, Lanthénas l'introducteur." This, said the author, was the new power in the Convention and in the departments and the "ci-devant reine, Mme. Coco, étendue sur un sofa, entourée de tous ces beaux esprits, raisonne à perte de vue sur la guerre, la politique, les subsistances."[56]

The declaration of the public prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville, at Madame Roland's trial in November, reflected these accusations. He accused her of corresponding with the Girondin refugees in the provinces and stated that even while she was incarcerated she had corresponded with "les conspirateurs retirés à Caen" by means of an intermediary still in Paris. He stated that "cette femme intrigante, connue pour avoir réuni chez elle, en conciliabules, les principaux chefs de la conspiration, conciliabules dont elle était l'âme, quoiqu'en prison, recevait des lettres de Barbaroux et autres réfugiés à Caen."[57] She responded, he added, "toujours dans le sens de favoriser la conspiration." He cited several specific examples of such correspondence and then defined the charges against her. The accusations had been brought against her "pour avoir méchamment, et à dessein, participé à la conspiration qui a existé contre l'unité et l'indivisibilité de la république, contre la liberté et la sûreté du peuple francais, en réunissant chez elle, en conciliabules, les principaux chefs de cette conspiration, et entretenant avec eux des correspondances tendantes a faciliter leurs projets liberticides."[58] For these crimes "<elle> sera prise-au-corps, arrêtée et écrouée sur les registres de la maison d'arrêt de la Conciergerie du palais de Paris.".[59]

Madame Roland had actually been transferred to the Conciergerie on October 31, the day of the execution of the Girondin deputies, and from the time of her arrival there had been constructing a written defence which she planned to present verbally at her trial. In it she clarified her position with regard to the accusations against her, which, she said, "repose entièrement sur ma prétendue complicité avec des hommes appelés 'conspirateurs.'" She claimed in her defense that her relationship with a small number of these people was "très antérieure aux circonstances politiques qui les font considérer comme coupables." When they were refugees hiding out in the provinces she claimed to have had virtually no communication with them. She stated that "s'ils ont erré ce fut de bonne foi...ils sont à mes yeux malheureux sans être coupables."[60] She stated that she had seen these men "animés du plus vif enthousiasme pour le bien du peuple, dédaigner de la flatter, résolus à périr victimes de son aveuglement, plutôt que de le tromper."[61] She claimed that the "conciliabules" were innocent in nature. Her husband had colleagues, friends, and acquaintances in to dinner once a week. "Là, dans des conversations très publiques, on s'entretenait ouvertement de ce qui intéressait tout le monde." Furthermore, she stated, Roland's writings were testimonies to his love of peace and order, "exposant d'une manière touchante les meilleurs principes de la morale et de la politique." These writings, she said, attested to his wisdom and even "ses comptes prouveront sa pureté."[62]

As it turned out Madame Roland was never allowed to use most of her defence. The revolutionary tribunal which heard the case against her on November 8 allowed her only a few words and then ruled that she must be quiet as her statements were in defense of the Girondins, who were criminals condemned by law. Her subsequent appeal to the audience was met with hostility and she was not allowed to speak again.[63]

The tribunal found Madame Roland guilty as charged. As a result she was condemned to death according to the law of December 16, 1792, which read: "La Convention nationale décrète, que quiconque proposera ou tentera de rompre l'unité de la république française ou en détacher les parties intégrantes pour les unir à un territoire étranger, sera puni de mort."[64] Her belongings were declared to be the property of the République and the declaration read that "le présent jugement sera, dans les vingt-quatre heures, mis à exécution sur la place publique de la Révolution de cette ville." The judgement would be "imprimé et affiché dans toute l'étendue de la république, partout où besoin sera."[65] Fouquier-Tinville signed the declaration immediately and set the time of her execution for three o'clock the same afternoon.

The Moniteur of November 8, 1793 issued a terse report of the proceedings. It read, "Marie-Jeanne Phlipon, femme Roland, ci-devant ministre de l'intérieur, âgée de 39 ans, native de Paris, convaincue d'être auteur et complice d'une conspiration qui a existé contre l'unité et l'indivisibilité de la république, et contre la liberté et la sûreté du peuple français, a été condamnée à la peine de mort."[66] Two days later news of her death reached her husband at Rouen where he had taken refuge. He left the city almost immediately and on an isolated country road he took his own life. In Mes Dernières pensées, written very near the end of her life, Madame Roland eloquently expressed her love for Buzot. "Adieu...Non, c'est de toi seul que je ne me sépare point; quitter la terre, c'est nous rapprocher."[67] She showed great courage in meeting death. Her final words have accompanied her memory throughout history. Facing the statue of Liberty across the Place de la Révolution, she said, "O Liberté, que de crimes commis en ton nom!"[68]

Chapter VI

The Year III

The execution of Madame Roland and Olympe de Gouges had come within weeks, as we have seen, of the proscription of the women's political clubs at the end of October, 1793. Thereafter, in Paris and throughout France the policy of the Terror had been implemented on a broad scale by the Committees of Public Safety and General Security, basing themselves on the authority of the National Convention. Although organized activity was forbidden, there is evidence that individual women continued to be involved in political action throughout the Year II, and many women fell victim to the Terror. According to the old but still authoritative statistical study by Donald Greer, well over a thousand women went under the guillotine after conviction. Of those, 897 were commoners from the former Third Estate, including 137 from the upper middle class, 90 from the lower middle class, 389 from the working class, and 281 were peasants. And "of the 200 socially unidentifiable victims, . . . 65 or 33%, were women, though women constitute only 9% (1332) of the total (14,080)." Greer observed also that "the incidence of the Terror was more severe for women of the privileged orders than for those of the Third Estate." There were 226 noble women or 20 per cent of the order who were executed, and 126 nuns constituting 14 per cent of the victims from the order of the clergy.[1]

Although it appeared on the surface that the women were relatively passive during this time, evidence points to an ongoing clandestine political activity. Records show that in Paris at least one hundred ninety-five "jacobines" or "militantes" were active, or more precisely were later accused of having been politically active during the Years II and III.[2] For example, the femme François, wife of a wine merchant, "Jacobine outrée," was arrested for welcoming "les exagérés" to her home. The femme Claudel, meanwhile, was arrested for participation in "conciliabules" or clandestine meetings chez François which took place between 6 or 7 P.M. and 10 P.M. over a period of four months every three or four days. Likewise the arrest of Anne Richard, femme Bodson, who was denounced "pour participation aux conciliabules chez François."[3] In February, 1794 the militante Auxerre was denounced for saying "qu'ils étaient le souverain, que les officiers municipaux et les autorités n'étaient que leurs agents." The femme Milet was denounced in April of 1794 "pour propos hébertistes," and Marie Gaillol, femme Dubois, was arrested in July of 1794 "pour avoir causé du trouble dans l'assemblée générale dans la nuit du 9 au 10."[4] After the fall of the Robespierrists in Thermidor, the new government faced acute economic problems paralleled by an increasingly hostile population. The months following the repeal of the Maximum in December, 1794, saw Parisians plunged more deeply than ever into a struggle to survive within an economy ravaged by ever rising prices and consistently low wages. By spring the situation in the capital was appalling.

Between January and March, 1795, as the Thermidorean Reaction continued and the political situation again became fluid, Paris was experiencing famine conditions. The women of the people were accosted in the streets by muscadins (young men of the bourgeoisie) and whipped, beaten, and generally humiliated. The "jeunesse dorée" treated the women to brutality which may have originated in political disagreement but which often manifested itself with distinctly violent sexual overtones. The streets were no longer safe for women and incidents of harassment were reported daily by the police observers. One such incident involved a mother and daughter who were accosted upon leaving the galleries of the Convention. While the mother was beaten by the group, the daughter was sexually molested.[5]

Meanwhile, female clandestine political activity continued and many women attended meetings, sometimes in conjunction with the men and sometimes separately, where political discontent formed the basis for discussion. Although the meetings often originated with the purpose of helping the families of imprisoned sans-culottes, they soon became a hotbed of insurrectional plotting and a place where the Convention was constantly criticized for ignoring its role of furthering the "bonheur du peuple".[6] Probably the best documented of these gatherings is the one which began meeting in mid-January in the faubourg Saint-Antoine and which has become known as the "conspiration Lagrelet," named after one of the participants. It began with the usual purpose but soon was preaching sedition in the faubourg. Women were active and knowledgeable participants. Seven women were among the eighteen members denounced on March 30. The conspirators were found to have a supply of arms including "quarante-neuf cartouches garnies de balles, et environ une trentaine de cartouches à poudre" as well as two guns, two swords and two pistols. A woman was said to have alerted one of her relatives to the fact that "dans la nuit du 29 ou 30, une partie de la Convention serait égorgée, les boutiques et les magasins pillés."[7] The group reportedly had the intention "d'envoyer des députations aux assemblées des sections et aux autorités constituées." It was reported that the conspirators had been surrounded and put in prison where they would have time to reflect on this maxim: "Une société ne peut souffrir dans son sein que ceux qui veulent souffrir les lois émanées de sa volonté." [8] Later, six women were put on trial for this conspiracy along with nineteen men.[9] Although overt organized political participation may have ended after October of 1793, these kinds of evidence serve to illustrate that the women were still active albeit in a manner much more secretive.

The harsh conditions of the winter months of 1795 brought increasing hardship to a population already struggling to survive. While a small but wealthy segment of the population enjoyed a life of luxury, the majority experienced a "sentiment profond de tristesse." If the present was terrible, "on craint encore plus pour l'avenir."[10] Temperatures were extremely cold for Paris with readings sometimes plunging to ten degrees below freezing and on 4 pluviose (23 January 1795) the thermometre registered 16 degrees below freezing, one of the lowest readings in Paris during the eighteenth century.[11] The days of mere scarcity were over. The Seine was frozen and boats could no longer be used to provision the city. The bread ration dropped ever lower and hunger combined with the intolerable cold brought about many deaths. Many others were the result of suicide. A police report of late December stated that "une femme a été trouvée étendue dans sa chambre, raide de froid; l'on a employé tous les soins possibles pour la ramener à la vie."[12] Later on there were many such reports per day. As the misery of the people increased, unrest in the capital once again became the main topic of the police reports.

In mid-March the women began to congregate and to formulate petitions of complaint, such as the one from the faubourgs Saint-Jacques and Saint-Marcel addressed to the Convention. This one read, "Le pain nous manque; nous sommes à la veille de regretter tous les sacrifices que nous avons fait pour la Révolution."[13] Two days later in the section de la Republique, the women threatened once again to march on the Convention. Women were everywhere in the demonstrations during these unhappy days, but at the hour of the distribution of bread and meat each one would disappear from that front as she went to try to obtain food for a family that had already suffered enormously and for which she was responsible.[14] Many brochures were posted around the city at this time which appealed to the people to rise up and demand the application of the Constitution of 1793. These appeals targeted not just the sans-culotte but also his wife. Some in fact were written by women. A case in point was the pamphlet entitled Le Réveil Républicain par une Démocrate and was written by the Citizeness Dubois. In it she complained of the scarcity of bread and other basic necessities and of the increasing wealth of the merchants. She argued that the rights of the people had been confiscated, that the Convention must be concerned with the "bonheur de la nation" or it would have betrayed its oath to the people, and she proclaimed that the people must rise up and insist upon the Constitution.[15]

The story of la Grande Nanette, a laundress from the Section St. Marcel, who took action on March 15 against the Convention, is one example of a woman who could have been acting in response to these various calls to arms. Nanette and others like her joined a delegation headed for the Convention and caused a disturbance upon departure. She insulted the commissaires and made derogatory comments about the Convention and proclaimed that "La section des meurt-de-faim va demander du pain à des gueux et des scélérats, il faut leur parler fermement." Nanette's group demanded that the deputation not flatter the Convention, but rather insist upon bread. Once arrived at the Convention la Grande Nanette and one of her comrades entered after the delegation to make sure that the delegates did not grovel in front of the deputies.[16]

On March 23 the female workers at the Arsenal threatened to throw into the river the muscadins who came to the faubourg Saint-Antoine to intimidate the workers.[17] Police reported on the same day that a woman "qui a foulé la cocarde à ses pieds" had been arrested.[18] The next day four of the most heavily populated sections of Paris, including des Marchés et des Lombards, received no bread at all. On March 27 the police reported that at the door of a baker's shop in the section de l'Observatoire, "des femmes se sont permis ... d'arracher les cocardes à d'autres femmes, les ont jetées en l'air et foulées aux pieds, en tenant les propos les plus indécents contre la Convention et la République."[19] Many other incidents of a similar nature occurred during these last days of March and the women were accused of attempting to instigate riots. On the twenty-first of the month (the first of Germinal in the year III), a group of women went in the company of men of the faubourg Saint-Antoine to complain to the Convention about the shortage of bread. The observateurs de police remarked at this time that in the group there were many women, "instigatrices," provoking the citizens to revolt.[20] The same day a woman disrupted the debate in the Convention by shouting that the royalists were assassinating the patriots.[21] Bread was obviously not the only issue brought to the fore during these days of misery.

A. Germinal.

On the twenty-sixth of March (7 Germinal) the women tried to incite the men to march on the Convention. "Des femmes, dans la rue Martin, ont tenu des propos séditieux, et elles ont dit entre autres que les hommes étaient des lâches de ne pas se montrer, et qu'il était impossible de vivre avec de si mauvais pain et en aussi petite quantité." Furthermore, "les femmes, à l'atelier du magasin de farine d'Elisabeth, se sont portées dans tous les ateliers pour forcer les femmes qui y étaient de se joindre à elles pour aller à la Convention et obliger leur chef de les suivre."[22] Processions and protests got out of hand and arrests were made. On the twenty-seventh of March (8 Germinal) women from the section des Gravilliers marched on the Convention and the debate that preceded their entry illustrates the fear that the women had inspired in some of the deputies. One of them, Sautereau, of the Nievre, stated that he had just heard the women shout "A bas la Convention!" He said that their intention was not so much to obtain bread which perhaps they were not even lacking, but rather, "Ces cris ne sont pas ceux des républicains, mais ceux des royalistes." He then asked that the Committee of General Security, which must have information about this gathering, be present to inform the deputies. This proposition was decreed. Another deputy, Guyomar of the Cotes du Nord, requested that the citizenesses be admitted to the bar only "dans le nombre préscrit par la loi." This proposal also was adopted. The women, however, insisted on being admitted "en masse." Another deputy, Blad, from Finisterre, insisted that the Convention keep to its decree, and if the petitioners did not wish to submit, they would not be allowed to enter at all. This too was decreed and twenty women were allowed to enter, one of whom spoke for the group, complaining that instead of the promised pound of bread, they had been able to obtain only half a pound that morning. No one wanted it. Furthermore, the citizeness stated that "Personne ne peut, avec 40 sous par jour, acheter des denrées qui suppléent au défaut de viande."[23]

In response the women received from the president a speech on patriotism and glory which emphatically blamed the previous government for all the problems besetting this one. However, the president insisted, "depuis le 9 thermidor, la fortune de la république a changé; la justice a été mise à l'ordre du jour; déjà beaucoup de maux ont été réparés." In order to repair everything, he said, "la Convention a besoin du calme et de la vertu du peuple." The Convention, said the President, shared the hardship of the people and "elle usera de sa puissance pour les adoucir." He then warned the women that they must stay clear of "des insinuations perfides" because that would hinder the arrival of the supplies. Not to be duped or sidetracked, the women responded with their usual shout, "Du pain! du pain!" A long harangue from the deputy Boissy d'Anglas of Ardèche was interrupted twice by the women. Boissy was attempting to convince the women that they should return to their section because bread had arrived there just after they had departed for the Convention. The women retorted that they were from all the sections.[24]

Another part of the demonstration took place the same day and involved about six hundred women, along with a few men, who attempted to organize a meeting in the Gravilliers section. The women combed the area and forced about four hundred individuals to the door of the general assembly hall, named a president and two secretaries, and read the section of the Constitution which said, "Lorsqu'il y a oppression, l'insurrection est le plus saint des devoirs."[25] The deputy Ysabeau of Indre et Loire, who described the situation to the Convention on the day the event occurred, suggested that since this crowd had refused to disband and was at that very moment marching on the Convention, the Committee of General Security had decided "à déployer la fermeté qui anime la représentation nationale, et nous savons, après avoir épuisé tous les moyens de persuasion et de prudence, ce que notre devoir nous commande."[26] At this point Ysabeau warned the Convention that other sections were involved and a great insurrection had been planned for decadi. The women would be at the forefront of this demonstration and the constitution would be a major issue. Another of the deputies, Perrin, representing the Vosges, stated that these assemblies were not dangerous. "Les colonnes qui viennent à la Convention sont composées de quelques hommes, de femmes et d'enfants qui portent la constitution."[27] In carrying the Constitution with them the women felt that they were acting within a framework of legality, their actions being justified by the

Constitution. Members of the Convention saw it differently. Ysabeau declared that most of the men and women in the crowd "avaient bu avec excès, malgré la cherté de l'eau-de-vie et du vin" and, according to him, "la table de nos droits" or the Constitution, "a suffi, par le respect profond qu'elle imprime à toute âme républicaine, pour que leur marche ne fût pas troublée."[28] Under instructions from the Committee of General Security and the military the insurrection was quelled in the sections by the armed guard and by the police who ordered section assemblies to disband under threat of deportation. The unrest continued over the next few days and the police and guard were kept busy attempting to keep the peace. The misery of the starving people continued to dominate the police reports and the journals with accounts of the ever worsening situation. For example on the twenty-ninth a mother murdered two of her three children rather than see them die of hunger.[29]

On April 1, (12 Germinal) when the daily quota of bread was one quarteron or 122.25 grams maximum per person, and some sections had no bread at all, a major demonstration took place. In the section la Cité, at nine a.m., groups of women gathered and led by two young drummers and with two cannoniers at their head they went to the Cathedral of Notre Dame (Temple de la Raison) for a general, if illegal, meeting and from there they proceeded to the Convention. In the neighbouring sections of Pont-Neuf and

Fraternité the women joined in the action. They obtained a drum and attempted to force the commissaires to join them in their march. In the sections of the north the men entered houses in order to conscript demonstrators while the women engaged in taxation populaire, fixing the price of flour and potatoes at a figure that they deemed reasonable.[30] Finally, the crowd arrived at the Convention and it is generally agreed that among the protestors women were more numerous than were men. Deputations from several sections spoke to the Convention and ensuing discussions were constantly interrupted by a chorus of women's voices. When the president suggested, after a deputation from the section de la Fraternité had complained about the inequality in the distribution of flour, that the sooner the Convention could get on with its work the sooner they could deal with the needs of the people, the response was swift and loud. "Des hommes et des femmes s'écrient; Il faut qu'elle s'en occupe tout de suite; nous n'avons pas de pain."[31] When the president attempted to calm the crowd by applauding the "dévouement et la force" of the good citizens of Paris the women responded with, "Du pain! du pain!" When asked directly to leave the Convention the response of the women was the same.[32] Obviously, the women were concerned about the scarcity of food and basic necessities which plagued the capital but their political discontent had once again contributed to bringing them into the spotlight of the Convention. The telling response of one of them, "nous sommes chez nous," when the delegation was asked to leave the meeting[33] is indicative of the women's feeling of political place, of the right to political participation, and the understanding that a political solution to their daily struggle was both feasible and necessary.

The group from the Halle aux Blés contained a large female element. This deputation delivered an impassioned plea for reform, explaining that the constitution was "une propriété nationale" because it had been sanctioned by the people. Only the people had the right to destroy the constitution because it belonged only to them. They had put the seal of their sovereignty on it and the spokesperson explained that "un bon gouvernement fasse oublier le régime odieux de la terreur." The deputation complained that government had become too centralized. "Vous avez réuni tous les pouvoirs dans vos mains." This they felt constituted a "réunion monstreuse" which had led to a dictatorship. It was necessary to distribute the power among the various sectors. "Rendez à l'agriculture son activité, au commerce son éclat, aux assignats leur confiance" and to the people of France "<rendez> leur tranquillité".[34] Once these things had been achieved, according to the petitioners, it would be time to convoke a legislature. The spokesperson then implored the deputies to put aside their hatred and get on with the business of governing the country. "Au nom du peuple, au nom des maux que nous avons soufferts, au nom des veuves, des orphelins et de toutes les victimes de la dernière tyrannie, au nom des patriotes assassinés, nous vous prions d'abjurer, ou de moins d'adjourner vos haines. Qu'une minorité cesse de confondre la licence avec la liberté des opinions." The deputation asked also for immediate liberation of those deputies detained during the previous Thermidor, complaining that "nous n'aimons pas plus les élargissements en masse que les jugements par fournées." To enthusiastic applause the spokesperson concluded, "Un gouvernement sans responsabilité n'est pas un gouvernement."[35]

Bourdon, deputy from l'Oise, proposed that the citizens of Paris be assured that the Convention would keep its promises and apply itself to the question of subsistences and the means to expedite the delivery of the rations to the hungry. This proposal was adopted and the crowd left the Convention little by little after Legendre stated that "la Convention va s'occuper des subsistances du peuple". He requested that the good citizens should leave the deputies to their deliberations. "Quant à nous, citoyens, abjurons nos haines et nos divisions, et occupons-nous uniquement du bonheur du people."[36] The Convention then used the occasion to arrest the leaders of the opposition in order that "cette journée soit complète."[37] Three such members were ordered deported and eight more former Jacobins were arrested.[38] Between eleven and eleven thirty p.m. the Convention declared Paris to be in a state of siege and under the military rule of General Pichegru. The insurrection had failed. The insurgents had made no significant gains and despite the promises made that day in the Convention, the situation continued to deteriorate.

One month later, in sections where scarcity and attendant suffering were most severe, it was possible to obtain only two ounces or sixty grams of bread as the daily ration. By mid-May this was the situation in all the sections of Paris. On May 14, in the rue Tixanderie, the quantity was one ounce per person per day. Even with these restrictions there was not enough bread to go around and large numbers of people each day were deprived of adequate food. The people's suffering reached levels beyond human endurance. Atrocities became daily occurrences and often mothers killed their children to end their misery. Many bodies floated in the Seine. The report of the police of the fourteenth of May (25 Floréal) stated that the people did not seem unduly agitated given that the state of affairs had not improved. The quality of bread was no better than the previous day, there was no more of it, there existed the same inequality of distribution, the prices of necessities of all kinds was increasing hourly at an unthinkable rate, and hoarding was an ongoing problem. Yet the people seemed to be relatively calm. Believing, however, that their report should be accurate, its authors went on to describe the actual condition of the people. In fact, they asked, in this time of great difficulty "où plusieurs citoyens extenues où fatigués tombent de besoin" and "les mères désolées, gémissant sur le sort de leurs enfants qu'elles ne peuvent plus apaiser, souffrent" and, finally, in a time "où le suicide n'a jamais été aussi commun," must this calm not be regarded as "le calme de la mort "? Was it not possible to think that this apparent tranquillity "ne paraît <devoir> lutter longtemps contre tant de fléaux réunis qui paralysent la société, si les choses ne prennent un tour plus favorable?"[39]

The next day the Gazette Française reported that "le nombre de suicides est véritablement effrayant dans cette malheureuse commune; il ne passe guère de jour que des hommes ou des femmes au désespoir ne se précipitent dans la rivière."[40] Earlier, between April ninth and twentieth, at least seventeen persons were retrieved from the water. On May 14 (25 floréal) it was reported that a woman was heard to tell her child that "C'est ici que ton père a versé son sang le 10 août....je te briserai la tête sur ce même pavé plutôt que de te voir mourir de faim."[41] In all parts of the city "on n'entend que des plaintes et des gémissements; l'on souhaite la mort à chaque instant et la privation d'une vie qu'on ne peut plus soutenir."[42] The report on 29 floréal stated that "les femmes surtout paraissaient très mécontentes de la pénurie soutenue des subsistances, du peu et mauvais pain qu'elles recevaient, de la lenteur des arrivages, qu'elles commençaient à regarder comme illusoires desannonces d'une abondance prochaine." On May 20, (first prairial) the report read as follows: "Toujours de grands murmures de la part du peuple aux portes des boulangers. Des esprits échauffés s'y répandaient en invectives et propos les plus séditieux contre les autorités constituées; les femmes surtout, bien moins patientes, semblent être beaucoup plus agitées." The report also stated that the women provoked the citizens to disorder and "les invitent à ne pas recevoir la légère portion de pain qui leur est accordée."[43] In fact, the stronger among them, in refusing their pitiful ration, often turned their wrath upon their weaker sisters, threatening to whip them or pull them by the hair if they tried to take the portion of bread that the others had refused.[44]

Throughout the spring the Agence des subsistances was constantly besieged by angry women complaining of the problems encountered in their attempts to feed their families. The women often took the commissaires with them to the Convention as spokespersons but more often that not they appeared more like hostages. The women had good reason to hate the commissaires for being unfair in the distribution of food, for laughing at them in their impoverished and starved condition, for their lack of sympathy and for their disrespectful, and sometimes obscene, remarks. The commissaires were known to have suggested that the women could eat hay, boards, or even "s'essuyer le derrière et se lécher les doigts."[45] In return, the women used bad language and made obscene gestures. The relationship between the two groups was not ideal.

By the eighteenth of May the women were increasingly showing signs of severe agitation and readiness to take the law into their own hands. "Les femmes criaient aussi contre la Convention en disant que les hommes étaient de f...c...d'endurer la faim, et qu'avec la même lâcheté ils avaient laissé guillotiner bien des innocents sous leurs yeux."[46] From the Messager du soir of the first prairial came the news that "Hier, dans la rue des Arcis, des femmes qui etaient chez un marchand de vin ont aperçu un charretier qui retirait d'une voiture un pain pour le remettre à un citoyen." The women left their glasses and bottles and threw themselves with energy on the wagon, taking several loaves of bread for which they paid a price determined by taxation populaire. "Elles s'étaient réfugiées, pour procéder a leur partage, sous la porte d'un patriote aussi probe que courageux; mais il les a chassées, renvoyées dans leur cabaret". The women ended up in a neighbouring épicerie where they were allowed to use the scales "pour qu'elles missent plus d'équité et de justice dans leurs opérations." They were reported to have said "puisque la Convention nous vole nos assignats quand elle en a besoin, nous pouvons bien prendre le pain de notre voisin en le payant, quand nous mourons de faim." Each one of the women repeated the phrase, "Nécessité contraint la loi."[47]

The expressions of discontent increased steadily. "Des murmures violents excités par les sentiments du besoin" were accompanied by insults and threats directed at the deputies. It was the women most often, "pressées par la faim et par les cris de leurs enfants, s'exhalaient en plaintes les plus vives et se permettaient mille imprécations."[48] The women's voices, joined with those of the men, "formaient un concert lamentable et présentaient en même temps l'image d'un spectacle très douloureux." The theme heard on all sides was, "Que deviendrons-nous? Comment pourrons-nous atteindre la moisson? Non seulement nous sommes réduits a present à la plus faible portion de l'aliment de première nécessité; à peine même le pain est-il mangeable."[49] To make matters worse, the price of basic necessities was increasing hourly. The poor were forced to sell their furniture in order to subsist and often were driven to criminal activity in order to stay alive.

B. Prairial.

On May 20 (first Prairial), the people of Paris rebelled against the inhuman suffering which had become their lot. Early in the morning they began gathering in the various sections planning to march once more on the Convention. The women were instrumental in what was about to take place. A brochure entitled *Insurrection du peuple, pour obtenir du pain et reconquérir ses droits* had been circulating in the city since the previous day and it contained a plan for the uprising. The plan was communicated to the deputies of the Convention on the morning of first Prairial by a member of the Committee of General Security. It stated, among other things, that the government was starving, incarcerating, and killing the people, that such a government could only survive due to the people's weakness, and that under such circumstances, "lorsque l'oppression est insupportable, l'insurrection est le plus sacré des devoirs et un besoin de première nécessité."[50]

In many sections of the city the usual drumbeat sounded early in the morning and signalled the beginning of the insurrection. As soon as they had gathered in sufficient numbers, the women headed for the offices of the comités civils of the various sections in order to commandeer the commissaires for the demonstration that would take place at the Convention. As usual the women's animosity toward the commissaires determined their treatment of them. One woman was heard to shout, "Vieux bougre, tu as le ventre plein, c'est pourquoi tu ne veux pas marcher avec les autres, mais tu marcheras." Another proclaimed, "Scélérat, tu n'as pas encore longtemps à régner et tu es comme rien actuellement et demain tu seras comme rien du tout."[51] Actions followed on threats and the women maltreated any individuals who seemed to be getting in their way. A group from the section des Arcis, having beaten up an adjutant at the Pont au Change and stolen his caisses for drums, continued on to wrench the épaulettes from the uniform of a policeman and cut them into tiny pieces.[52] The general mood was one of hostility. "On avait vu...une très grande partie des habitants des faubourgs, aigris par le cruel sentiment de leurs maux, arriver le matin avec les dispositions hostiles." They were heard to menace those whom they regarded as enemies. "Beaucoup d'entre eux portaient encore sur leurs chapeaux écrit avec de la craie: Du pain et la Constitution de 1793."[53] The women forced many in their paths to go with them. In several sections they entered boutiques and ateliers and conscripted workers to join them. It seems, however, that they were most severe with other women, holding them by their skirts, throwing stones at them, and generally threatening them with dire punishments if they did not support the march.[54] The crowds that made their way from the sections to the Convention were large and unruly. This "foule immense" was animated mainly by a sense of despair. "Trompés tant de fois par de belles promesses qui n'ont rien produit, les citoyens que la faim et la misère aigrissent s'excitaient aujourd'hui à aller en masse demander pain à la Convention." The women were without question in the forefront of the insurrection.

"Il faut que les femmes des faubourgs marchent en avant, qu'elles traversent les rues marchandes, emmènent avec elles toutes les femmes des boutiquiers; les hommes suivront par derrière."[55] The faubourgs were in a state of "grande agitation," the like of which had not been seen since 1789, with the women prepared and ready for action. The women of Les Halles were expecting momentarily to be taken to the Tuileries. Guards were performing frequent patrols in the section Palais-National. The women at the doors of the baker's shops "éclatent en injures et en menaces contre la représentation nationale."[56]

This was without a doubt primarily a women's insurrection. It is certain as well that it was an insurrection of a most serious nature. "Jamais pareille chose ne s'est vue depuis l'existence de cette grande ville; ni le 14 juillet, ni le 10 août, ni le 31 mai n'ont vu de dispositions militaires aussi extraordinaires."[57] The women's forceful political statement could not be ignored and they were determined to be recognized. They were in the process of demanding the right to be acknowledged and to speak, to be listened to, and to receive a response. It was reported that most of them were saying, "il faut que tout Paris se lève et marche à la Convention; il faut ne les laisser sortir que quand ils nous auront donné du pain; il y a trop longtemps qu'ils nous renvoient au lendemain."[58] Interestingly enough, they were also reported to have said that "les hommes suivront par derrière."[59]

When the Convention began its sitting at eleven a.m. many women were already in the galleries. The large crowd of demonstrators was also converging on the Tuileries. The behaviour of the women already there greatly annoyed the deputies. When a proclamation to the citizens of Paris was read, containing many flowery phrases to the effect that the members of the Convention understood the suffering of Parisians, the women's anger erupted into catcalls and derisive shouts. It was reported that "Les femmes remplissent la dernière tribune du côté de Brutus; elles montent sur les bancs et crient avec force: Du pain! du pain!" The president threatened to adjourn the meeting if the women did not calm down. The women refused to listen. "Les unes rient de l'état où elles voient la convention, les autres montrent le poing au président et aux autres représentants du peuple." Women in the second tribune on the other side joined in the shouting, also demanding bread. The deputies sat in "le plus grand calme." After about fifteen minutes the tumult ceased, but still the women would not allow the deputies to speak without interruption.[60]

In attempting to restore order, the President stated that "Ces cris affreux nous annoncent que l'orage va éclater." He then tried once more to reassure the women, saying, "Le pain qu'on nous demande fait l'objet de notre plus grande sollicitude; nous nous occupons jour et nuit d'en procurer à nos concitoyens." In response again the cry went up from the women, "Du pain! du pain." Again the president threatened to adjourn the meeting. It took another quarter hour for the women to calm down. The president warned that all this shouting would not hasten the arrival of bread "d'un seul instant," a comment to which one of the women responded, "Il y a assez longtemps que nous attendons, f......." The great majority of the deputies rose and demanded that the woman be arrested. Another woman, seated next to her, shook her fist at the President. One of the deputies demanded that the President "fasse vider cette tribune" and he indicated the one on the left. This caused another outbreak of noise and threats from the women. The president made another attempt to calm the women, saying that one of the deputies "<rendrait> compte de nouvelles satisfaisantes. Il arrive de presser l'arrivage des subsistances, et il va apprendre...." But once more he was interrupted by the women's shouts. "Non! non! nous voulons du pain." One of the deputies asked, "Est-ce que la Convention aurait peur?" Another, Feraud, who was in charge of provisioning the city, added, "Sachons de périr, s'il le faut." The women then shouted and threatened him particularly.[61]

Dumont now took the presidential chair from de Vernier and immediately proclaimed that he would sooner die than be disrespectful to the Convention. While all the members rose as a sign of support, the women laughed and shouted. The women, in fact, made so much noise that it was impossible to hear the next speaker, Louvet. The president then issued another warning. "Pour la dernière fois je déclare aux tribunes que je donnerai l'ordre de les faire évacuer, d'arrêter les agitateurs et de les livrer aux tribunaux." The deputies applauded while the women responded with "violents murmures." An officer of the army went over and "leur parle avec énergie," but with little result.[62]

Boissy, deputy from Ardeche, now took over the president's chair. Louvet then resumed his interrupted speech with demands that the women be punished for their behaviour. He complained that "il est impossible que le nombre des bons citoyens qui assistent à la séance ne soit pas le plus grand: il est impossible qu'ils ne se réunissent pas tous pour empêcher que les ris et les cris séditieux que nous venons d'entendre ne se renouvellent." He went on to state that the deputies were there as the representatives of twenty-five million people and that "cinquante séditieux ne nous feront pas la loi." The Convention must know how to deploy all its power because "un outrage a été fait à la représentation nationale." He then indicated the tribune from which seditious remarks had emanated and asked that the Convention arrest the guilty, proclaiming, "Au dehors, des ferments de sédition sont jetés; le royalisme et le terrorisme s'agitent et se réunissent; réunissons-nous pour les détruire." At this the women shouted, "A bas! Du pain! du pain!" and once again it took a quarter of an hour before order could be restored and the women finally stopped their shouts and threats. The president called a brigadier-general to his side before he spoke again, expressing his displeasure. The women shouted for bread after his every comment. When he called the meeting back to order, the women shouted, "Du pain! du pain!" He asked if it was necessary to evacuate the tribune. The women's response was the same. "A défaut d' obéissance," demanded Boissy , "dois-je faire arrêter tous les individus qui la composent?" At this point the deputies rose en masse and shouted agreement. The women continued to shout, "Du pain! du pain!"[63]

The large tribune to the right of the hall and the adjoining one were full of women who continued to shout and threaten. They signalled to other women who were as yet still only in the corridors to come and join them. United, they shouted, "Du pain! La Constitution de '93." Some shouted, "La Constitution de '89". The deputies were indignant as were some observers in the tribunes and "<ils> parlent avec la plus ardente colère contre les femmes qui les ont proférés." Prolonged arguments resulted. Dumont returned and explained that he had left the chair to arrange the evacuation of the tribunes. He read his proposal to that end and it was immediately adopted. The President began to order the evacuation executed by armed force and the women responded by shouting, "nous ne nous en irons pas!", but one group of women exited almost immediately thereafter when violent blows were heard on the door to the left of the President's chair. The President charged a brigadier general who was near the bar with the safety of the Convention and one of the deputies, Thibaudeau, proposed that the Convention be prepared to respond to force with force and this proposition was adopted immediately.[64]

The women were asked to leave at least twice in the next few minutes. Their refusal was firm. Dumont addressed them. "Le décret que la Convention a rendu ordonne que la tribune sera evacuée. J'invite les bons citoyens <!> qui s'y trouvent à la céder à la force armée." In response the women shouted once again, "Du pain! du pain!" The deputy Auguis of Deux Sèvres joined the fray and stated that the Convention was surrounded by several batallions "qui sont animés du zèle le plus patriotique" and which were dedicated to the defense of the republic and its representatives. Dumont then resumed his tirade and proposed that the Convention get rid of "quelques mégères qui voudraient nous faire la loi." He concluded with the words, "Citoyens, soyons fermes, sévères, et nous verrons disparaître les factieux." The women in the tribunes shouted their disgust and annoyance and were forcibly removed immediately afterwards by the general appointed to the job. He was assisted in his task by four soldiers and two young men armed with whips. They emptied the large tribune at the left first and proceeded on to the others "d'où étaient partis des cris séditieux." The operation took about half and hour.[65]

Meanwhile, the crowd outside was beating on the door in an effort to gain entrance. This group was composed of both government supporters and insurgents who had converged on the Convention at approximately the same time.[66] The deputies fled to the upper rows of the tribunes and the police stayed in the lower rows in order to afford them protection from the crowd which presently burst in. Part of this group joined forces with those already acting against the women and the women were definitively "repoussées." Except, that is, for one who was still in the tribunes and dared once again to "insulte la Convention" and "la menace" in response to the President's announcement that "Le calme est rétabli; la foule est repoussée; on a arrêté un de ceux qui la conduisaient." As well as the dissenting voice of the woman, who was pursued through the corridors and taken, once caught, before the Committee of General Security, other voices shouted in response to the President's statement, proclaiming such action to be illegal. Tumult ensued in response to the warlike shouts of several deputies and the deputy Auguis reported that certain "individus ont fait courir le bruit qu'ici l'on égorgeait les femmes."[67]

The deputy Feraud had chosen this moment to enter the Convention. Not a personal favorite of the protestors, he had already been mauled by the crowd outside and his clothes were torn. At exactly 3:33, reported the Moniteur with incredible precision, "une foule nombreuse de femmes et d'hommes armés de fusils, de piques et de sabres" burst into the Convention. "Du pain et la Constitution de 93" was written on their hats and they were shouting the same slogan. They forced the deputies off the benches and took their seats. The others filled the floor and stopped in front of the president. An altercation ensued involving one of the hats which bore the controversial inscription and a citizen was shot and stabbed as a result. Féraud, while attempting to protect the President from the twenty guns aimed in his direction, was shot. Although details are not clear, it seems that one of the protestors had tried to stop Féraud and was stabbed by an officer. In retaliation a shot was fired and Féraud was hit. "Il tombe; on s'en empare, on l'accable de coups, on le traîne par les cheveux jusque dans le couloir."[68] It was reported that the shot was fired by a young woman, Marie Françoise Carle Migelly, but evidence is inconclusive. She is thought to have later been denounced for the murder but all that was really proven in the case was that she was known to have inflicted a stab wound on his corpse.[69]

The head of Féraud was paraded around the capital for many hours while the insurgents held forth in the Convention. The crowd demanded bread, but as well they asked for the Constitution of

1793, a new commune, freedom for imprisoned patriots, the arrest of hostile deputies, the return of the Montagnards arrested in Germinal, inspections to verify subsistence laws were being followed, and renewal of sectional authorities. It is little wonder that police reports of the second prairial concluded that the shortage of basic necessities provided only a pretext for action and that the actual cause was an agitation of a political nature in which the people expressed their discontent in demanding, along with bread, "le rétablissement de la Commune, la Constitution de 1793, la mise en liberté de tous les députés Montagnards et de tous les membres des anciens Comités révolutionnaires."[70]

The remaining Jacobin deputies were able, due to crowd support, to get some measures passed. Generally, however, the melee was disorganized and the crowd could not hold on to its temporary success. During the evening the deputies were able to muster troops from supporting sections and succeeded in having the protesters expelled. The prominence of the women at every stage of the day's events llustrates the importance of their participation.

The next day the crowd rose again. The women participated but not with the same spirit of leadership as on the previous day. This day their role was of a secondary nature. They are reported to have surrounded the Convention, but made no attempt to force their way in. They were gathered in small, menacing groups and insulted the National Guard that protected the deputies but generally did not inspire violent action as they had the day before. A formidable force had been drawn up against the insurgents under the command of General Dubois. Whereas the insurgents numbered about 20,000, close to 40,000 men stood in armed opposition to them.[71] The importance of this uprising is underscored by the fact that this was the largest display of military force to be seen in the city since 1789.[72] No shots were fired and many of the troops deserted to the side of the insurgents, who failed once again to follow up their temporary advantage. Instead they listened once again to vague promises from the deputies. In the evening they returned home, ears no doubt ringing with the same messages that they had received so often in the past. On 3 prairial the Convention sent armed forces into the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in an unsuccessful attempt to definitively end the rebellion. They were forced to retreat. The women of the faubourg were instrumental in an appeal to sound the generale alarm and to sound the tocsin because, they said, "alors les hommes iront après." The women also were involved in saving one of the insurgents, Tinel, from execution. They took him home to the faubourg and it was reported that "les femmes du faubourg" had given "la vie à un frère."[73] On the fourth the citizens of the faubourg were asked to hand over the assassins of Feraud and all arms that might be in their possession. As the army stood ready to advance, the women once again took to the streets to defend the faubourg against the troops of General Kilmaine who later wrote, "Nous étions entourés d'une multitude innombrable d'hommes armés et d'une horde de mégères mille fois plus atroces que les hommes."[74] When threatened with lack of provisions and attack from the National Guard the citizens split into two groups. One was of the opinion that they should surrender. The other, and this group included the women, wished to hold out until the bitter end. It was reported that they inspired the men to maintain resistance.[75] Testimony taken later showed that women were armed and active. Louise Catherine Vignot was asked if she were not among the women "qui voulaient exciter les citoyens à ne pas laisser sortir la troupe qui était dans le faubourg." She was also questioned about why she was in the streets with a sword in her possession. Another woman, la femme Ladroite, and her daughter were accused of having spent the day "tenant les propos les plus incendiaires et les plus provocants, disant qu'il ne fallait pas souffrir que l'on rendit les canons."[76] Police reported that "les groupes, dans tous les quartiers de Paris, ont été très nombreux et fort tumultueux jusqu'à sept heures du soir....les femmes, comme des furies, excitaient les hommes et s'écriaient: 'il faut soutenir nos frères du faubourg Antoine, avoir raison des représentants, et ne faire aucune grâce aux marchands et aux muscadins.'"[77]

Reports of the police on the situation at 5:30 stated that the citizens were at this time determined to hold out against the forces sent against them. Furthermore the report stated that the women were assembled in every street and were making a great noise. The police observateur Heroux stated that "Le pain est la base de leur insurrection physiquement parlant, mais la Constitution est l'âme."[78] Police reports from the section du Finistere stated that at about eight in the evening "les femmes provoquèrent les hommes à sécourir le faubourg Antoine."[79] However, more support was needed than was obtained and the faubourg surrendered later that evening. No shots were fired.

The repression of the insurgents was harsh indeed. The Commission which was set up to administer justice sat for ten weeks and tried one hundred thirty two persons, condemning nineteen of these to death, six of whom were deputies of the Mountain. One hundred forty-eight women were arrested in the wake of the disturbance and nineteen others were interrogated but set free.*[80] A police report of the seventh prairial reported that Paris was now "dans l'état le plus calme" and that "l'arrestation, l'incarcération des terroristes et autres particuliers suspects se font sans réclamations", but best of all,"personne ne contredit; les hommes regardent, les femmes se taisent"![81]

The days of Prairial were without a doubt "women's days." As Dominique Godineau has so aptly pointed out, the recorded comments on the insurrection underscore the importance of the women's role. The sheer numerical strength of women in the events supports this argument. According to a police informer, "C'est une mauvaise femme égarée, pourquoi n'est-elle pas la seule?"[82] Subsequent references to the events also give credence to the vital role of women. Prairial is referred to as the day that "les femmes ont été à la Convention" and when "les femmes y portaient le trouble" or as the day when "les femmes travaillent à sauver la république."[83] The authorities considered a man to be "d'autant plus dangereux que ses fonctions le mettent à même de parler souvent aux femmes."[84] The objectives of these women's days were highly political. As well as bread, the women were demanding "le rétablissement de la commune, la Constitution de 1793, la mise en liberté de tous les députés Montagards et de tous les membres des anciens Comités révolutionnaires."[85] All authority not emanating from the people would be suspended and "tout agent du gouvernement qui n'obéira sera puni comme tyran."[86]

The police inspectors had witnessed in many sections a violent response to the Convention's efforts to reestablish order. They had seen "presque dans toutes les sections" that the proclamation made the evening of the first prairial against the popular movements "avait excité le plus grande mécontentement et provoqué les cris de la sédition et d'une révolte décidée contre la Convention, notamment contre les représentants connus par leurs principes de justice."[87] The women were, therefore, once again active and present in large numbers in an insurrection with major political objectives.

Records exist which provide an abundance of proof that the women's movement during Germinal and Prairial was above all a political phenomenon.[88] Charges laid against women after the spring insurrection ranged from having expressed "la plus grande joie" when the rebels got the upper hand to having belonged to the "société Lazowski" which was said to be "une des plus ardentes coriphes pour prêcher le pillage, l'anarchie et le terrorisme."[89] Another woman, Marie Duschèsne, was arrested and imprisoned "pour avoir provoqué les femmes à la révolte"[90] and la femme Baillet "dans les moments orageux qui ont troublé cette Commune" when "les femmes ont joué un rôle de boutefeu" was "pas exempte de reproche."[91]

Between the first and the eighth of Prairial the Convention passed four decrees aimed uniquely at controlling the activities of women. This in itself speaks for the importance of the role they had played and reflects the fear that their involvement had inspired in the authorities. As previously mentioned, Dumont had, on the first Prairial, requested that the women no longer be allowed in the tribunes of the Convention and his proposition was

approved. He said, "Il faut les écarter des assemblées politiques, où elles n'ont rien à faire, et où elles ne peuvent mettre que le trouble."[92]. In response the Convention decreed that "jusqu'à ce que le calme soit rétabli dans la commune de Paris, aucune femme ne sera admise dans les tribunes de la salle où se tiennent les séances de l'assemblée, et qu'à l'avenir elles n'y seront admises que lorsqu'elles seront accompagnées d'un citoyen, qui sera tenu de présenter sa carte de citoyen à la garde qui sera placée au bas de l'escalier qui conduit à ces tribunes."[93] On the second Prairial Legendre stated that "il faudrait inviter toutes les femmes à se retirer chez elles et à ne pas se rassembler en groupes." He went on to explain that he did not mean those who were waiting for bread at the doors of the bakery shops but rather spoke of the women "qui sont toujours à la porte du Palais-National." He declared that "La faiblesse de leur sexe désarme les hommes" and vowed "que je me laisserais plutôt égorger que de blesser une femme." Therefore, he explained, "Je demande qu'on les fasse rentrer chez elle."[94] On the fourth Prairial the Convention issued a statement saying that "après avoir entendu le rapport de ses comités de salut public, de sûreté générale et militaire" they considered that some of the agitators were men in women's clothing, but that there were also present "des femmes égarées, suscitées par les ennemis de la liberté" who "abusent des égards qu'on a pour la faiblesse de leur sexe, courent les rues, s'attroupent, se mettent dans les rangs, jettent le désordre dans toutes opérations de police et militaires." Therefore, decreed the Convention, "toutes les femmes se retireront, jusqu'à ce qu'autrement soit ordonné, dans leurs domiciles respectifs; celles qui, une heure après l'affiche du présent décret, seront trouvées dans les rues, attroupées au dessus du nombre de cinq, seront dispersées par la force armée, et successivement mises en état d'arrestation jusqu'à ce que la tranquillité publique soit retablie dans Paris."[95] The number and severity of these decrees issued within so short a time demonstrate the importance of the women's participation.

Although the repression was severe, Prairial marks the apogee of women's political involvement in the Revolutionary struggle and illustrates the fullest flowering of their political awareness and responsibility. The extent and dedication of their involvement speak for themselves, as do their tenacity and courage in those days of uncertainty and danger. They fought in the Convention and in the streets for the right to participate in affairs of government and they demonstrated a political dedication and understanding that few could have dreamed of in the opening days of the Revolution.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

My research suggests that the role of women in the French Revolution was more complex and influential than previously thought. Rather than observing from the sidelines, the female element of the population indulged in a vigorous grass roots participation which exerted enormous influence on the immediate direction of events and which resulted in ramifications of lasting importance. Women's political awareness and understanding expanded as the revolution progressed and the nature of their participation by the spring of 1795 indicated the existence by that time of a sizeable element of the female population that was by now fully politicized, if still unenfranchised. Despite the repressive measures taken during the revolution to divest women of any right to political activity, they continued to take part in an increasingly meaningful and effective manner. The women demonstrated a determination to participate fully in the political life of the nation as well as an unshakeable belief in their right to do so.

Women were part of the political mainstream in the Revolution, their involvement superseding any artificial parameters of gender. These women, who were far from being a homogeneous group of "furies," came from a variety of backgrounds and rallied to universal issues of humanity, of which food was certainly one, and politics definitely another. They understood, or came to understand, the realities of the intersection of the two and the result was an energetic political display which involved a surprising awareness and understanding of events in the larger revolutionary context. Female involvement was not primarily about food. The issue of bread may have been the one that brought women into the main arena of the Revolution, but once they were there, political interest triumphed. For the brief period of the Revolution women went forward from the issues that supposedly consume only the female element of the population, and plunged headlong into roles of political activism that seem to have rivalled those of the men in some of the *grandes journées* and that were of primary importance on at least two occasions, the October Days of 1789 and the spring days of 1795. They moved then as a powerful and informed element in events of great significance and participated alongside the men with understanding and determination in an effort to resolve issues that were universal in scope. A few notable women, in particular Olympe de Gouges and Madame Roland, made important contributions as individuals, and somewhere between the few "femmes célèbres" and the "furies" there existed a large body of increasingly aware, involved, and dedicated female political participants, exercising their rights and responsibilities as citizens, although always without the formal privileges of citizenship.

The women were themselves not unaware of the significance of their participation. The editors of a contemporary women's journal, Le Courrier de l'Hymen ou Journal des Dames, wrote in February of 1791: "Les hommes ne se souviennent-ils plus de nous avoir vues a l'attaque de la Bastille, sur les chemins de Versailles et au champ de la Fédération? Qu'ils prennent garde d'exciter notre courage! Nous les avons rendus libres."[1] I have attempted in my work to recognize the importance of the women's role and to place them in the mainstream of revolutionary activity, which is their rightful place, and in so doing, to acknowledge that they were instrumental in shaping a modern France, and with it, a modern world.

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49. Ibid.

50. Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860, recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des Chambres françaises, imprimé par order du Sénat et de la Chambre des députés, Première série (1787 a 1799). 82 vols. (Paris: Librairie administrative de P. Dupont, 1862-; Washington, D.C.: Microcard Editions, 1967); séance 5 octobre 1789.

51. M. Mounier, Appel au tribunal de l'opinion publique, du rapport de M. Chabroud, et du décret rendu par l'Assemblée Nationale le 2 Octobre 1790, etc., (Geneve, 1790), 130.

52. Procédure criminelle, no. 81.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Mounier, Appel au tribunal, 130.

57. Procédure criminelle, no. 81.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., no.148.

61. Archives parlementaires, October 5, 1789.

62. Moniteur 2:12.

63. J. J. Mounier, Exposé justificatif de la conduite de Mounier, 68.

64. Ibid.

65. Procédure criminelle, no. 187.

66. Ibid., no. 183.

67. Mounier, Appel, 131.

68. Procédure criminelle, no. 187.

69. Ibid., no. 183.

70. Ibid., no. 187.

71. Ibid., nos. 187 and 183.

72. Ibid., no. 81.

73. Ibid., no. 83.

74. Ibid., no. 183.

75. Maillard claimed that the women insisted on accompanying him back to Paris instead of the two deputies assigned by the king to do this task. It should be noted that Maillard's statements were sometimes suspect. Mounier, for instance, said that he was a braggart and a liar; Mounier, Appel, 136.

76. Marquise de la Tour du Pin, Mémoires, 118.

77. Ibid., 120.

78. Louis Gottschalk and Margaret Maddox, Lafayette in the French Revolution: Through the October Days. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 368-372.

79. Procédure criminelle, no. 18. Simon Schama in Citizens, 467, mistakenly says that Miomandre de Sainte-Marie was beheaded on October 6.

80. Procédure criminelle, no. 90.

81. Ibid., no. 94.

82. Ibid., no. 82.

83. Révolutions de Paris, no. 12, October 6, 1789, 20.

84. Journal des Révolutions de l'Europe, 5:76 as quoted in Adrien Lasserre, Participation collective des femmes, 175.

85. Révolutions de Paris, no. 12, October 6, 1789, 22.

86. Procédure criminelle, no. 148.

87. Bailly, Mémoires, 3:118-119.

88. Actes de la commune de Paris pendant la révolution, ed. Sigismund Lacroix, vol. 2 (Paris: L. Cerf, 1895), 190.

89. Bailly, Mémoires, 3:119.

90. Madame Campan, Mémoires sur la vie privée de Marie-Antoinette, reine de France et de Navarre suivis de souvenirs et anecdotes historiques sur les regnes de Louis XIV, de Louis XV et de Louis XVI (Paris: Baudouin Frères, 1823), 86-87.

91. Correspondence d'un habitant de Paris avec ses amis de Suisse, d'angleterre, sur les événements de 1789, 1790, jusq'en avril 1791 (Paris: Chez Desenne, 1791), as cited by Lasserre, Participation collective des femmes, 177.

92. Correspondance de Mercy-Argenteau, 2: 271, as quoted in A. Mathiez, "Etude critique sur les journées des 5 et 6 octobre, 1789," Revue historique 68 (1898): 54.

93. Memoirs of Madame de Tourzel, as cited by E. L. Higgins, ed., The French Revolution as Told by Contemporaries (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1938), 131.

94. Procédure criminelle, nos. 62, 91, 126, 92..

95. Ibid., no. 35.

96. Ibid., no. 101.

97. Théroigne de Méricourt maintained that she was not on the journey; she was living at Versailles that summer. See chapter V below.

98. Procédure criminelle, no. 82.

99. Ibid., no. 103.

100. Ibid., no. 102.

101. Ibid., no. 105.

102. Ibid., nos. 106, 108, 183, 187, 284, 90, 85.

103. Ibid., no. 370.

104. Ibid., no. 225.

105. Ibid., no. 243.

106. Ibid., no. 236.

107. Ibid., no. 30.

108. Ibid., no. 48.

109. Ibid., no. 90.

110. Ibid., no. 81.

111. Lettre de Madame de M., Etrennes Nationales des Dames, Nov. 3, 1789, 1.

112. Bailly, Mémoires, 3:84.

113. De Villiers, Reine Audu, 26, 27.

114. Procédure criminelle, nos. 343, 81, 38, 183, 139.

115. Bailly, Mémoires, 3:86.

116. Procédure criminelle, no. 339.

117. For a discussion of the murky role of Orléans, see George Armstrong Kelly, Victims, Authority, and Terror: The Parallel Deaths of d'Orléans, Custine, Bailly, and Malesherbes (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 61-68.

118. Procédure criminelle, nos. 79, 18, 56.

119. For a detailed treatment, see A.Mathiez, "Etude critique sur les journées des 5 et 6 octobre 1789," Revue historique 69 (1899): 47-48.

120. Révolutions de Paris, no. 12, Oct. 6, 1789, 15.

121. Procédure criminelle, no. 220.

122. Ibid., no. 343.

123. Ibid.

124. Ibid., nos. 183, 187. St. Priest was later denounced in the Assembly by Mirabeau for saying to Françoise Rolin (Mirabeau referred to a "phalange" of women) that when they had one king they had bread and today they have twelve hundred kings and should ask them for bread. Saint- Priest in defending himself asked, "et d'abord peut-on appeler une phalange de femmes les cinq

ou six auxquelles j'ai parlé dans l'Oeil-de-Boeuf?" See Moniteur, 2:40.

125. Ami du peuple, no. 27, 7 octobre, 1789.

126. Procédure criminelle, no. 187.

127. Les Héroines de Paris, in Les Femmes dans la Révolution française, 1:4.

NOTES

Chapter III--Women and Revolutionary Politics.

1. For a thorough study of the fetes, see Mona Ozouf, *La Fête révolutionnaire, 1789-1799* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). Related themes are taken up in Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au combat: L'Imagerie et la symbolique républicaines de 1789 à 1880* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).

2. Godineau, *Tricoteuses*, 113-15, and Marc de Villiers, *Histoire des clubs de femmes et des légions d'amazones* (Paris: Plon, 1910), Chapter 2. Few of these societies have been studied in any detail. Nor has Michael Kennedy written much about women in his massive study of the Jacobin clubs, but he has promised to examine their role in his projected third volume. See *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution*, *The Middle Years* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 10.

3. Marcellin Pellet, *Etude historique et biographique sur Théroigne de Méricourt* (Paris: Maison Quantin, 1886), 40.

4. *Révolutions de France et Brabant*, as quoted in Duhet, *Les Femmes*, 100. For a fuller discussion of Théroigne de Méricourt, see Chapter V of this thesis.

5. From the Chronique de Paris as quoted in de Villiers, 43-44.

6. Duhet, Les Femmes, 101.

7. Babillard, no. 11, 14 June 1791, as cited in Isabel Bourdin, Les Sociétés populaires à Paris pendant la Révolution (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1937), 140. For the Cercle Sociale, see Gary Kates, The Cercle Social, the Girondins, and the French Revolution (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

8. Babillard, no. 11, 14 juin 1791, as cited in Boudin, Sociétés populaires, 140.

9. Ibid.

10. Réglement de la Société Fraternelle in Les Femmes dans la Révolution française, vol. 2.

11. See Duhet, Les Femmes, 103.

12. Réglement.

13. Extrait des Déliberations de la Société fraternelle des deux sexes, 4 December, 1791, in de Villiers, Clubs des femmes, 51.

14. Ibid., 42.

15. Ibid.

16. Duhet, Les Femmes, 115-116.

17. Discours prononcé à la Société Fraternelle des Minimes, in Les Femmes dans la Révolution française, vol. 2.

18. Ibid.

19. *La Gazette universelle*, 7 and 17 July 1791, as cited in Rosa, *Citoyennes*, 83.

20. Ibid.

21. Bourdin, *Sociétés populaires*, 145.

22. Rosa, *Citoyennes*, 82.

23. Bourdin, *Sociétés populaires*, 146-147.

24. *Patriote français*, 1 April 1791, as cited in Bourdin, *Sociétés populaires*, 147.

25. Rosa, *Citoyennes*, 82.

26. *Bouche de Fer* no. 64.

27. *Bouche de Fer* no. 1.

28. *Révolutions de Paris*, no. 143, mars 31 a avril 7, 1792.

29. According to de Villiers, *Clubs des Femmes*, 38, she lived quietly in Holland and later was arrested there as an Orangiste (1795) when the Batavian Republic was declared and spent almost three years in prison.

30. For a discussion of this declaration, see Chapter 6 below.

31. *Archives parlementaires*, 34:289.

32. Ibid., 41:63-64.

33. Elizabeth Racz, "The Women's Rights Movement in the French Revolution," *Science and Society* 16 (1951-52): 151-174.

34. The most comprehensive treatment is that of Evelyne Sullerot, *Histoire de la presse féminine en France, des origines à 1848* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966), 42-86.

35. As cited ibid., 48.

36. Ibid., 46-54.

37. Ibid., 54-55.

38. See Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789-1799* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990).

39. For more details on Madame Roland, see Chapter V below.

40. Rudé, *Crowd*, 99-100.

41. Joseph Vaesen, *Révolution française: Lyon en 1791. Notes et documents*, vol.4 (Lyon: Henri Georg, n.d.), 55.

42. Ibid.

43. Maurice Wahl, *Les Premières années de la révolution à Lyon, 1788-92* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1894), 365.

44. Ibid.

45. *Révolutions de Paris*, no. 185, 19-26 January, 1793, 295.

46. Wahl, *Premières années*, 366.

47. Ibid.

48. *Journal de Lyon*, January 9, 1793, 25-26.

49. Ibid., 26.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., 27.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., January 10, 1793, 30.

56. Révolutions de Paris, no. 185, 19-26 January, 1793, 235.

57. Ibid.

58. Journal de la société populaire, no. 21, 335-336.

59. Wahl, Premières années, 606.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Bill Edmonds, "The Rise and Fall of Popular Democracy in Lyon, 1789-1795," Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester 67 (1984): 408-449. Equally devoid of information on the women of Lyon are the detailed studies by Richard Cobb, Les Armées révolutionnaires: Instrument de la Terreur dans les départements, avril 1793 - floréal An II, 2 vols. (Paris, Mouton, 1961-63), and C. Riffaterre, Le Mouvement antijacobin et antiparisien à Lyon et dans le Rhône-et-Loire en 1793 (29 mai 15 août), 2 vols. (Paris, 1912, 1928).

63. Robert R. Palmer, Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1941), 168, 169, 174.

NOTES

Chapter IV--The Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires.

1. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:37.

2. Ibid.

3. Michelet, Femmes, 72.

4. L'ami de peuple, 30 dec. 1790.

5. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:vi.

6. Moniteur, 15:544.

7. Moniteur, 16:362.

8. Discours prononcé à la barre de l'Assemblée Nationale, par Madame Claire Lacombe, 25 July 1793, in Les Femmes dans la Révolution française. For a good brief treatment of Léon and Lacombe, see R. B. Rose, The Enragés: Socialists of the French Revolution? (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965), chapters 5 and 6.

9. Moniteur, 13:248.

10. Archives parlementaires, 48:714 and Tuetey, Répertoire général, report no. 2281, 9:283.

11. Cerati, Citoyennes, 36.

12. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:123.

13. Cerati, Citoyennes, 39.

14. Cerati, Citoyennes, 41-43.

15. Ibid., 40.

16. Lacour, Trois femmes, 356.

17. Quoted in Lacour, Trois femmes, 355 and taken from the library of Paul Lacombe.

18. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 131.

19. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:186.

20. Cerati, Citoyennes, 54, from Journal des Debats, 14 May 1793.

21. Ibid.

22. De Villiers says that "ce club feminin, organisé uniquement pour coopérer au renversement des Girondins, ne mérite aucune indulgence"; Clubs des Femmes, 228.

23. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:198.

24. Ibid., 5:199. The Courrier des Départements reported on the 22 that this speech was delivered by a woman. This is cited by de Villiers, Clubs des Femmes, 233.

25. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:199.

26. Cerati, Citoyennes, 54.

27. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:212.

28. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 34.

29. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 8:415, doc. no. 2642.

30. Ibid., 9:597.

31. For a fuller discussion of this situation, see Chapter V below.

32. Moniteur, 16:421.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid. Marat replied with these words:"C'est le plan de la femme Roland"; ibid., 16:435.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 16:432.

39. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:186, doc. no. 617.

40. Cited in Cerati, Citoyennes, 56-57.

41. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 137.

42. Tuetey, Répertoire général, doc. no. 645, 9:196.

43. Cerati, Citoyennes, 58.

44. Ibid., 59.

45. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 137.

46. Ibid., 136.

47. Cerati, Citoyennes, taken from the memoires of Meillan.

48. Moniteur, 16:527.

49. See his The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 147.

50. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 138.

51. Moniteur, 16:543.

52. Cerati, Citoyennes, 60.

53. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 138.

54. Ibid. This idea of women armed to the teeth was insisted upon by many of the Girondins in the weeks that followed.

55. Cerati, Citoyennes, 60, 61.

56. Quoted by Slavin, Making of an Insurrection, 136. It might be noted that not even Rudé has been able to provide an analysis of the insurgents of May 31-June 2, 1793. See Crowd, 122-25.

57. Discours prononcé à la société des républicaines révolutionnaires par les citoyennes de la section des droits de l'homme, in Les Femmes dans la Révolution française.

58. Moniteur, 16:731.

59. Cerati, Citoyennes, 92.

60. Ibid., 94, from Dossier Lacombe AN T1. 001-1-3.

61. Ibid., 95-96.

62. Ibid., 27.

63. De Villiers, Clubs des Femmes, 226-227.

64. Report of the police observateur Dutard in Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:204, document no. 659.

65. Gorsas in Courrier des départements 20 mai 1793.

66. Moniteur, 17:661.

67. Ibid., 17:679.

68. Ibid., 17:699.

69. Réglement issued July 9. Reproduced in Lacour, Trois Femmes, 355 but from the private papers of Paul Lacombe.

70. Ibid.

71. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 131.

72. Ibid.

73. Prousinalle (P. J. A. Roussel), Le Château des Tuileries ou récit de ce qui s'est passé dans l'intérieur de ce palais, depuis sa construction jusqu'à 18 Brumaire de l'an VIII. Paris: Chez Lerouge, 1802.

74. Ibid., 38.

75. Ibid., 39.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid., 41.

78. Ibid., 42-43.

79. Moniteur, 16:748.

80. Ibid., 16:762.

81. Ibid., 16:758.

82. Ibid., 16:754.

83. Ibid., 17:2. The names of women arrested on June 28 and imprisoned in la Force "pour cause d'emeute et pillage de savon" were published here.

84. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 141.

85. Moniteur, 17:151.

86. Cerati, Citoyennes, 105.

87. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:252, document 765.

88. Moniteur, 17:230.

89. Moniteur, 17:299. Minutes of the conseil general, July 31.

90. Cerati, Citoyennes, 102.

91. Moniteur, 17:120.

92. J. L. David, Rapport et décret pour la fête du 10 août, as cited in Godineau, Tricoteuses, 148.

93. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:263, document no. 821.

94. L'Ami du peuple, August 8, 1793.

95. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:356.

96. Ibid., 5:360.

97. Archives parlementaires, 19:83.

98. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 152.

99. Moniteur, 17:503-504.

100. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 159.

101. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:364-365, document no.1222.

102. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:368, document no. 1233.

103. Durham, "Sans-jupons' Crusade," 278.

104. Moniteur, 17:580.

105. Ibid., 17:580-581.

106. See Palmer, Twelve Who Ruled, 44-54, for a good discussion.

107. Petition of September 13. See 152-153 of this thesis.

108. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:484.

109. Report of police observateur Le Harivel in Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:395, document no. 1306.

110. Moniteur, 17:661.

111. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 120.

112. Report of police observateur Beraud in Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:412, document no. 1355.

113. Report of police observateur Rousseville in Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:422, document no. 1388.

114. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:413, document number 1357.

115. Ibid., document no. 1359.

116. Moniteur, 17:717.

117. Ibid., 17:718.

118. Report of la Tour-la Montagne in Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:420-421, document no. 1381.

119. Report of Le Harivel in Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:421, document no. 1383.

120. Report of Rousseville in Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:422, document no. 1388.

121. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:486.

122. Ibid.

123. Ibid., 5:407.

124. Moniteur, 17:695.

125. Ibid., 696.

126. Rapport fait par la Citoyenne Lacombe à la Société des Républicaines Révolutionnaires de ce qui s'est passé le 16 septembre à la société des Jacobins, in Les Femmes dans la Révolution française.

127. Moniteur, 18:62.

128. Ibid., 69.

129. Aulard, Jacobins, 5:451.

130. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 10:117-118.

131. Moniteur, 18:290.

132. Ibid.

133. Ibid., 299

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid.

136. Ibid., 300.

137. Ibid.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid.

140. Ibid.

141. Archives parlementaires, 78:364.

142. Moniteur, 18:450.

NOTES

Chapter V--Three "Femmes Célèbres."

A. Olympe de Gouges.

1. Claude Manceron in preface to Olivier Blanc, Olympe de Gouges (Paris: Editions Syros, 1981), 5.

2. Blanc, Olympe, Chapter 2.

3. Her actual spelling and grammar were weak and throughout her career she was forced to use many secretaries to record her thoughts; see Leopold Lacour, Les Origines du féminisme contemporain: trois femmes de la révolution, Olympe de Gouges, Théroigne de Méricourt, Rose Lacombe, (Paris: Plon, 1900), 41.

4. Mémoire de Madame Valmont (1784) is autobiographical in intent, although no proven link to the nobility was ever established.

5. Madame de Valmont in Oeuvres de Olympe de Gouges, Benoîte Groult, ed., (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986), 215.

6. Le Prince Philosophe quoted in Groult, Oeuvres, 30.

7. All reproduced in Groult, Oeuvres, 69-82.

8. Réflexions, in Groult, Oeuvres, 84.

9. Ibid., 86.

10. Cri du Sage, ibid., 88.

11. Ibid., 89-90.

12. Ibid., 90.

13. Ibid., 90-92.

14. Discours de l'aveugle aux Français, June 1789 in Lacour, Trois Femmes, 47.

15. Départ de M. Necker et de Madame de Gouges, in Groult, Oeuvres, 97.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 96-97.

18. Blanc, Olympe, 92.

19. Thérmometre du Jour, March 10, 1791.

20. L'Esprit français, as quoted in Blanc, Olympe, 124.

21. Lacour, Trois femmes, 126.

22. Preface to Mirabeau aux Champs-Elysées, quoted in Blanc, Olympe, 111.

23. Sera-t-il roi?, 4, as quoted in Blanc, Olympe,

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 6.

26. Ibid.

27. Preface to her Déclaration des droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne, dédiée à la Reine, September, 1791.

28. Déclaration, in Groult, Oeuvres, 102.

29. The Déclaration contained seventeen articles in all.

30. Lairtullier, Femmes célèbres, 110.

31. Quoted in Blanc, Olympe, 133-134.

32. La fierte de l'innocence, as quoted in Lairtullier, Femmes célèbres, 108.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., 104-105.

35. Ibid., 106-107.

36. Révolutions de Paris, 15 juillet 1792.

37. Les Fantômes de l'opinion publique, as cited in Blanc, Olympe, 143.

38. Pronostic sur Maximilien Robespierre, par un animal amphibie as quoted in Blanc, Olympe, 144.

39. Réponse de la justification de Robespierre, as quoted in Lairtullier, Femmes célèbres, 127.

40. Journal des Jacobins, 28 octobre 1792, as quoted in Blanc Olympe, 146.

41. Ibid.

42. Compte moral, as cited in Blanc, Olympe, 147.

43. Mon dernier mot, as cited in Lairtullier, Femmes célèbres, 124.

44. Ibid., 125.

45. See Lacour, Trois femmes, 39.

46. Moniteur, 14:751-752.

47. Révolutions de Paris, no.180, 22 decembre 1792.

48. Lacour, Trois femmes, 59.

49. Arrêt de mort, as quoted in Blanc, Olympe, 150.

50. L'Entrée de Dumourier <sic> à Bruxelles ou les vivandiers, as quoted in Blanc, Olympe, 154.

51. Complots dévoilés, as quoted in Blanc, Olympe, 155.

52. Avis pressant, as quoted in Blanc, Olympe, 156.

53. Testament politique, as quoted in Lairtullier, Femmes célèbres, 129.

54. Testament politique, as quoted in Lacour, Trois femmes, 64.

55. Lairtullier, Femmes célèbres, 128.

56. Les Trois urnes, as quoted in Blanc, Olympe, 168.

57. Défense de Olympe de Gouges face au Tribunal Révolutionnaire, in Groult, Oeuvres, 125.

58. Ibid., 127.

59. Ibid.

60. Lairtullier, Femmes célèbres, 130.

61. Report of police observateur La Tour-la-Montagne in Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:416-17, document no. 1367.

62.See Chapter 8 of Blanc, Olympe.

63. As cited by Soprani, La Révolution et les femmes, 166.

64. Lairtullier, Femmes célèbres, 133.

65. As cited by Soprani, La Révolution et les femmes, 166.

66. Moniteur, 18:326. She was in the habit of deducting seven years from her age.

67. Moniteur, 18:343-44.

68. Ibid., 18:450.

B. Théroigne de Méricourt.

1. Blanc, _Olympe_, 125.

2. Otto Ernst, _Théroigne de Méricourt, d'après des documents inédits tirés des archives secrètes de la maison d'Autriche_ (Paris: Payot, 1939); Marcellin Pellet, _Etude historique et biographique sur Théroigne de Méricourt_ (Paris: Maison Quantin, 1886); Ferdinand de Strobl-Ravelsberg, ed., _Les Confessions de Théroigne de Méricourt, la fameuse amazone révolutionnare_ (Paris: Louis Westhauser Editions, 1898); Elizabeth Roudinesco, _Théroigne de Méricourt: une femme mélancolique sous la Révolution_ (Paris: Seuil, 1989).

3. Lairtullier, _Femmes célèbres_, 55.

4. De Strobl-Ravelsberg, _Confessions_.

5. Ibid., 76.

6. Ibid., 95.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 118.

9. For a good discussion see Lacour, _Trois femmes_, 153-58.

10. Lairtullier, _Femmes célèbres_, 63.

11. De Strobl-Ravelsberg, _Confessions_, 118-119.

12. Ibid., 119.

13. Ernst, _Théroigne de Méricourt_, 125.

14. See Lacour, _Trois femmes_, 106-107, for examples.

15. De Strobl-Ravelsberg, _Confessions_, 119.

16. Ibid., 120.

17. Procédure criminelle, witness no. 203.

18. Ibid., no. 156.

19. Ibid., no. 91.

20. De Strobl-Ravelsberg, Confessions, 119.

21. Ibid., 156.

22. Ernst, Théroigne de Méricourt, 89-91.

23. De Strobl-Ravelsberg, Confessions, 9.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 157.

26. Ibid., 158.

27. Ibid., 122.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 123.

31. Révolutions de France et de Brabant, no. 14.

32. De Strobl-Ravelsberg, Confessions, 125.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., 161.

35. Ibid., 162.

36. Aulard, Jacobins, 3:346.

37. Ibid.

38. Le Patriote français, 4 fevrier 1792.

39. Journal des débats et de la correspondance de la Société des amis de la constitution, February 4, 1792 as quoted in Lacour, Trois femmes, 54.

40. Discours prononcé à Société Fraternelle des Minimes le 25 mars, 1792, l'an quatrième de la liberté in Les Femmes dans la Révolution française.

41. Ibid.

42. Aulard, Jacobins, 3:521.

43. Ibid.

44. Lacour, Trois femmes, 281, cites Lamartine as one author who depicted this scene.

45. Souvenirs de la Terreur as cited by Lacour, Trois femmes, 281.

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47. See Roudinesco, Théroigne de Méricourt, 125.

48. Ibid., 124.

49. Ernst, Théroigne de Méricourt, 282-88.

50. Pellet, Etude historique et biographique, 98.

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54. Ibid., 270.

55. Moniteur, 13:538.

56. Ibid.

57. Aux 48 sections, B.N. folio B.N. Lb41-4940

58. Ibid.

59. Tuetey, Répertoire général, 9:173, document no. 597.

60. Ibid., 9:174, document no. 598. Also see documents nos. 13 and 351.

61. Roudinesco, Théroigne de Méricourt, 152.

62. Procès-verbal établi par la police de la section le Pelletier, reproduced in Ernst, Théroigne de Méricourt, 282-283.

63. Catalogue de la collection Benjamin Fillon , cited in Roudinesco, Théroigne de Méricourt, 160.

64. The details of her illness vary according to source. This chronology has been constructed from information in Ernst, Théroigne de Méricourt; Roudinesco, Théroigne de Méricourt; and Lacour, Trois femmes.

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2. A Bosc, à Paris, 6 ou 7 octobre, 1789, in Lettres, 2:65.

3. A Bancal, à Clermont-Ferrand, 22 juin, 1791, in Lettres, 2:302.

4. Mémoires de Madame Roland, ed. C. Perroud, 2 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1905), 1:204.

5. Ibid.

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10. Ibid.

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12. A Robespierre, à Paris, 27 septembre, 1791, Lettres, 2:387.

13. Madame Roland, Mémoires, 2:477. This volume includes Souvenirs de Sophie Grandchamp in an appendix.

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17. Ibid.

18. Michelet commented that this passage was sublime.See G. May, Madame Roland, 218.

19. Moniteur, 12: 658-59.

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21. See Mémoires, 1:87n.

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27. Madame Roland, Mémoires, 1:121.

28. Ibid., 199.

29. Ibid., 232.

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49. Ibid., 24.

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5. Godineau, *Tricoteuses*, 293.

6. See ibid., 294 for details of some meetings.

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9. Godineau, *Tricoteuses*, 294.

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13. C. Marand-Fouquet, La Femme au temps de la Révolution (Paris: Stock/Laurence Pernoud, 1989), 277. Also see Moniteur, 23:717.

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16. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 298.

17. Aulard, La Réaction thermidorienne, 1:596.

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19. Ibid., 1:609.

20. Ibid., 1:589.

21. Moniteur, 24:36.

22. Aulard, La Réaction thermidorienne, 1:604.

23. Moniteur, 24:79.

24. Ibid.

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26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 85-86.

28. Ibid., 87.

29. Aulard, La Réaction thermidorienne, 1:615.

30. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 302.

31. Moniteur, 24:113.

32. Ibid.,114.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 115.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 119.

38. For details see Tønnesson, *Défaite*, chapter 9.

39. Aulard, *La Réaction thermidorienne*, 1:720-21.

40. Ibid., 1:723.

41. Godineau, *Tricoteuses*, 306.

42. Aulard, *La Réaction thermidorienne*, 1:724.

43. Ibid., 1:733-734, 727.

44. Godineau, *Tricoteuses*, 307.

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51. Godineau, *Tricoteuses*, 320.

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67. *Moniteur*, 24:502-03.

68. Ibid., 504.

69. Tønnesson, *Défaite*, 270.

70. Aulard, *La Réaction thermidorienne*, 1:733.

71. See Tønnesson, *Défaite*, 309n.

72. Rudé, *Crowd*, 154.

73. Godineau, *Tricoteuses*, 328.

74. *Détails circonstanciés*, Général Kilmaine, as cited in Tønnesson, *Défaite*, 315n.

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78. Godineau, Tricoteuses, 325.

79. Aulard, La Réaction thermidorienne, 1:743.

80. See Godineau, Tricoteuses, Chapter 2 of Part 4, 305-332, "Les Boutefeux" for an excellent discussion of the women's participation.

81. Aulard, La Réaction thermidorienne, 1:746.

82. Report of police observateur Castille as cited in Godineau, Tricoteuses, 329.

83. Ibid., 330.

84. Ibid.

85. Aulard, La Réaction themidorienne, 1:733.

86. Tarle, Germinal, 369.

87. Aulard, La Réaction thermidorienne, 1:733.

88. See Monnier and Soboul, Répertoire for an abundance of evidence to support these arguments.

89. Ibid., 529, 438.

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91. Ibid., 335.

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Chapter VII--Conclusion.

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